

# Platform cOoperativism

THE INTERNET. OWNERSHIP. DEMOCRACY.

**November 13-14, 2015  
at the New School, New York City**

Convened by Trebor Scholz (The New School) and  
Nathan Schneider (University of Colorado Boulder)

Third in a series of digital labor conferences at The New School

# INTRODUCTION

The seeds are being planted for a new kind of online economy. For all the wonders the Internet brings us, it is dominated by an economics of monopoly, extraction, and surveillance. Ordinary users retain little control over their personal data, and the digital workplace is creeping into every corner of workers' lives. Online platforms often exploit and exacerbate existing inequalities in society, even while promising to be the great equalizers. Could the Internet be owned and governed differently? What if Uber drivers could set up their own platform, or if cities could control their own version of Airbnb? Can Silicon Alley do things more democratically than Silicon Valley? What are the prospects for platform cooperativism?

On November 13 and 14, the New School in New York City will host a coming-out party for the cooperative Internet, built of platforms owned and governed by the people who rely on them. The program will include discussion sessions, screenings, monologues, legal hacks, workshops, and dialogues, as well as a showcase of projects, both conceptual and actual, under the purview of celebrity judges. We'll learn from coders and worker cooperatives, scholars and designers. Together, we'll put their lessons to work as we work toward usable apps and structural economic change. This is your chance to get on the ground floor of the next Internet, and to help make it a reality.

## Further reading:

- Trebor Scholz, "Platform Cooperativism vs. the Sharing Economy" (December 5, 2014) and "The Future of Work: The People's Uber" *Pacific Standard* (September 23, 2015)
- Nathan Schneider, "Owning Is the New Sharing," *Shareable* (December 21, 2014) and "Owning What We Share," *Pacific Standard* (September 1, 2015)
- Janelle Orsi, Frank Pasquale, Nathan Schneider, Pia Mancini, Trebor Scholz, "5 Ways to Take Back Tech," *The Nation* (May 27, 2015)

## SCHEDULE

Our time together starts with framing the concept of platform cooperativism. Later in the day, we will discuss the governance, legal realities and financing of platform co-ops. Friday will culminate in a showcase that will introduce a number of actually-existing projects that put these principles into action.

Saturday morning begins with a brief recap, followed by a showcase of projects that can provide essential infrastructure to the platform-cooperative ecosystem. In the afternoon and into the evening, discussions and workshops will enable us to coalesce our projects and ideas into strategies for meaningfully expanding ownership and governance of online platforms.

## LOCATIONS

**Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Auditorium**, Room N101  
Sheila C. Johnson Design Center  
66 Fifth Avenue

**Tishman Auditorium**, Room U100  
University Center, 63 Fifth Avenue

**Theresa Lang Community and Student Center**, Room I202

**Arnhold Hall**, 55 West 13th Street

**Hoerle Lecture Hall (UL105)**  
University Center, 63 Fifth Avenue

**Lecture Hall (UL104)**  
University Center, 63 Fifth Avenue

**Starr Foundation Hall (UL102)**  
University Center, 63 Fifth Avenue

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS LOCATIONS

U201, U202, U204, U205,  
U622, U311, U520  
University Center, 63 Fifth Avenue

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

**8:00–9:30**

**Registration/Coffee**  
**University Center**

**9:30**

**Opening Plenary**  
**Tishman Auditorium**

**Welcome**  
Trebor Scholz  
Nathan Schneider

**10:00 – 10:50**

Trebor Scholz  
*Unpacking Platform Cooperativism*

Response: Janelle Orsi

**11:00 – 12:50**

**Platform Society**  
**Kellen Auditorium**

Scott Heiferman  
*Platforms Against the Wall Street Vortex*

Annette Mühlberg  
*Guidelines For Good Digital Labor*

Paul D. Miller  
*Imaginary Apps*

Cindy Milstein  
*Re-Commoning Our Lives*

Facilitated by Nathan Schneider

**Making It Work**  
**Hoerle Lecture Hall**

Juliet Schor  
*How To Build And Sustain Cooperative Platforms*

Frank Pasquale  
*Risk Mitigation Strategies for Platform Cooperatives*

Arun Sundararajan  
*An Economic Perspective on Cooperatives, Blockchain-Based Collectives and Other Distributed Collaborative Organizations*

Brad Burnham  
*Whose Data?*

Facilitated by Rachel Sherman

**Conditions of Possibility**  
**Theresa Lang**

Christoph Spehr  
*Part Of The Solution: New Labor Rights, Entrepreneurial Rights And Social Transformation For The Age Of Algo-Capitalism*

Saskia Sassen  
A “Neighborhood/Low-Wage Workplace” Digital Platform

Mayo Fuster Morell  
Platform Capitalism versus Platform Cooperativism

Dmytri Kleiner  
A Proposal for “Venture Communism”

Facilitated by McKenzie Wark

**13:00 - 13:50**

**Lunch (venture into the neighborhood)**

**Special Lunch Session with Richard Stallman Theresa Lang**

Richard Stallman  
(via videoconference)  
Cooperativism's Digital Platforms Must Respect Endangered Digital Freedoms  
in conversation with Alfredo Lopez

**14:00 - 17:50**

**Friday Workshops**

Workshop sessions can be scheduled by any participants at the table outside UL104 in University Center. Times and locations can be found there as well.

**14:00 - 15:50**

**Co-op Law**  
Kellen Auditorium

Miriam Cherry  
Legal and Technical Challenges of Starting Worker Coops In The On-Demand Digital Economy

Brishen Rogers  
Organizing for Platform Cooperativism

Janine Berg

Platform Cooperativism from an Economist's Perspective

Valerio de Stefano  
Implications of Antitrust Law For Platform Cooperativism

Facilitated by Janelle Orsi

**Co-op Development: Incubators and Decelerators**

Hoerle Lecture Hall

Melissa Hoover  
Distinguishing Among the Various Cooperative Forms and Understanding How to Choose the Best One for Your Endeavor

Omar Freilla  
The Co-op Academy

Emma Yorra  
Scaling Cooperatives Through Platforms?

John Duda  
Anchoring Cooperativism

Facilitated by David Morgan

**16:00 - 17:50**

**Building New Supports For the New Workforce: The Role of Solidarity and New Labor Institutions**

Kellen Auditorium

Palak Shah  
What Would An Equitable On-Demand Economy Platform Look Like?

Yochai Benkler  
Peer Mutualism And The Future Of Capitalism

Andrea Dehlendorf  
OUR Walmart

Facilitated by Sara Horowitz

**Policy and the Partner State**

**Hoerle Lecture Hall**

Maria del Carmen Arroyo

Platform Cooperativism For NYC

Sofia Ranchordás

Sharing in the City

Rebecca Smith

Rights on Demand

Francesca Bria

Sovereign Technology and Innovation Policy Alternatives

Richard Barbrook

The Net Bill of Rights

Facilitated by Nathan Schneider

**Student Town Hall**

Room U311

New School graduate students who recently unionized, cooperativists, and Black Lives Matter student activists come together to imagine cooperative structures of future business, politics, and technology.

Kick-off by Omar Freilla

With: Zoe Carey, Eli Nadeau, Angela Difede, and others

Facilitated by Laura Y. Liu

**18:00 - 20:30**

**Owning Is the New Sharing: Actually-Existing Platform Co-ops**

Tishman Auditorium

Hosted by Nathan Schneider & Trebor Scholz

Welcome:  
New York City Council Member  
Maria del Carmen Arroyo

Introduction:  
Janelle Orsi  
The Next Sharing Economy

**Platform Showcase: Apps**

Andrés Monroy-Hernández and Justin Cranshaw

Fuselabs

Brianna Wettlaufer

Stocksy

Steven Lee Wage

Forward

Robert Benjamin

Member's Media

Francis Jervis

TimesFree

Richard Fay

Cooperative Content Corporation

Noemi Giszpenc

Data Commons Cooperative

Peter Harris

Resonate

Joshua Danielson

Loconomics

**Talk-Back**

Yochai Benkler, Scott Heiferman, Sara Horowitz, Paul D. Miller, Minerva Tantoco

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14**

**9:00 - 9:30**

**Taking Stock**

Tishman Auditorium

Welcome by Stephanie Browner (Dean, Eugene Lang The New School for Liberal Arts) & Nabil Echchaibi (Chair of Media Studies, University of Colorado Boulder)

Nathan Schneider and Trebor Scholz: Reflections on Friday

**9:30 - 10:50**

**Platform Showcase: Ecosystem Infrastructure**  
Tishman Auditorium

**Governance**

MJ Kaplan  
Loomio

Francesca Bria

D-CENT

Dan Mongan and Anna Bernasek  
*My User Agreement*

Matan Field

Backfeed

Ashley Taylor

ConsenSys

Pedro Jardin

CoLiga

**Financing**

Ethan Winn  
*Project SeedBombing*

Max Dana

External Revenue Service

Akseli Virtanen

Robin Hood Asset

Management Cooperative

Joel Dietz

Swarm

Adam Konner

rCredits

**11:00 - 12:50**

**Social Infrastructure**  
Kellen Auditorium

Robin Chase

Peers, Inc.

Antonio Aloisi

New Organizational Infrastructures as

Effective Advocates for Decent Work in the On-demand Economy

Saket Soni

*Time for a New Social Contract*

Tom Slee

Platform Co-Operatives And The Problem Of Trust

Facilitated by Julia Ott

**Worker Voice**

Hoerle Lecture Hall

Introduction:

Xtine Burrough

*Remediation in Digital Labor*

Kristy Milland

Amazon Mechanical Turk

Karla Morales

*Beyond Care Childcare Cooperative*

Raybblin Vargas

*Bits & Bites Tech Cafe*

Zenayda Bonilla

*Golden Steps Elder Care Cooperative*

Interviewed by Nathan Schneider

**13:00 - 13:50**

**Lunch (venture into the neighborhood)**

**Special Lunch Session with Michel Bauwens**

Hoerle Lecture Hall

Michel Bauwens (via videoconference)

*Platform Cooperativism In The Context Of Alternative Infrastructures For The Commons Economy*

Response: Thomas Dönnébrink

*European Experiments With Worker Ownership And Self-Governance*

**14:00 - 17:50**

**Saturday Workshops**

Workshop sessions can be scheduled by any participants at the table outside UL104 in University Center, near Hoerle Lecture Hall. Times and locations can be found there as well.

**14:00 - 15:50**

**Blockchained Together**

Kellen Auditorium

Rachel O'Dwyer

*Blockchain for Platform Cooperativism*

Joel Dietz

Swarm

Matan Field

Backfeed

Lana Swartz

*Blockchain Between Digital Metallism and Infrastructural Mutualism, Or: What Does (Can?) it Mean to be a "Peer"?*

Facilitated by Adam Konner

**Cooperative Financing**

Hoerle Lecture Hall

Carmen Rojas

*The Workers Lab*

Kanyi Maqubela

*The Next Platforms*

Danny Spitzberg

*Crowdfunding for Cooperatives*

Caroline Woolard

*From TradeSchool.coop to NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative*

Facilitated by: Nathan Schneider

**16:00 - 17:45**

**Organizing Workers (and Non-Workers)**  
Kellen Auditorium

Susie Cagle

*Reorganizing Independent Media Labor*

Ra Criscitiello

*Union Worker Cooperatives, Portable Benefits, and On-Demand App-Based Dispatch*

Astra Taylor

*Debtor Organizing*

Kati Sipp

*Reputation, Reputation, Reputation*

Facilitated by Karen Gregory

**The Design for Co-Op Apps**

Hoerle Lecture Hall

Marina Gorbis

*Designing a Generation of Positive Platforms*

Cameron Tonkinwise

*Designing More Convenient Solidarity*

Micky Metts

*Cooperative Development - Thinking Outside the Boss!*

Six Silberman & Vanessa Barth *Toward Fair Digital Work: Perspectives from a German Labor Union*

Facilitated by Trebor Scholz

**18:00 - 19:30**

**Cooperativism to Come**  
Tishman Auditorium

Douglas Rushkoff

*How Digital Media Finally Enables Distributed Enterprise*

Response: Astra Taylor

# ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

## ANTONIO ALOISI

### New Organizational Infrastructures As Effective Advocates For Decent Work In The On-Demand Economy

After analyzing causes and effects of the so-called “Uber-ization” of activism (i.e. activism by platform owners), Antonio will discuss strategies for sincere “digital organizing”. It is highly debatable if gig-workers could unionize, especially if they are labeled as contractors.

Since networks are considered the secret weapon of platforms, is there room for building new ones between cloud-workers and gain momentum for collective action? As the “Fight-For-15” campaign has left a promising legacy, the next challenge could consist in strengthening ties between casual workers and putting pressure on platforms in order to improve participation agreements to the benefit of vulnerable workforce.

To this purpose, this presentation will give particular attention to potential sources of worker organization (from virtual spaces like blogs and forums, to app-based drivers associations or worker-owned co-op). These tools could also represent a way to reduce information asymmetries, compare gig-providers, join forces and therefore increase bargaining power.

In a nutshell, new organizational and social infrastructures will appear (probably in the form of “movements of interests” focused on sectorial issues) and become an effective advocate for decent work in the on-demand economy.

Antonio Aloisi, born in 1989, is a Ph.D. candidate in Business and Social Law at Bocconi University, in Milan. His thesis aims at providing a theoretical analysis of how courts deal with economic reasons for dismissal and an impact assessment of recent flexicurity policies across Europe. He graduated in Law from Bocconi University (2013), with a dissertation on decentralized collective bargaining and the FIAT vs Italian trade unions case, supervised by Professor Stefano Liebman. His main research interests are Labor Law, Industrial Relations and Law of Business and Commerce. His current research activity focuses particularly on casual forms of work, including on-call contracts, crowd work, work in the “gig-economy” and “on-demand” work. Since February 2014, he has joined the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) as a member of the Head of Cabinet’s office, where he has mainly worked on a long-term vision and policy framework for fundamental school reforms in Italy.

@\_Aloisi

## MARIA DEL CARMEN ARROYO

### Platform Cooperativism For NYC

Worker cooperatives are businesses that are owned and managed democratically by employees. We have learned that this business model tends to provide higher wages and better economic benefits than the traditional

business structure. Many economic analysts believe worker cooperatives offer a viable method to address the long-term challenge of reducing the number of chronically unemployed and underemployed residents and the number of workers trapped in low-paying jobs. Increasing the number of worker cooperatives will require strong government support. At the New York City Council, we examined ways to invest in a comprehensive citywide effort that would facilitate the incubation of new worker cooperatives in a wide-range of disciplines across the City. Now in its second year, the Council’s initiative has helped to create a strong framework for the development and growth of worker owned businesses. Arroyo believes Platform Cooperativism will absolutely offer a viable option for allowing the business model to grow roots that will strengthen our communities in many ways and can put the public in greater control of the Internet, which can often feel like an abyss we are powerless over.

Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo has been in the New York City Council representing District 17 since 2005. Her district includes the communities of Mott Haven, Port Morris, Melrose, Hunts Point, Longwood, Morrisania, Crotona Park, Claremont Village, Concourse Village, Woodstock, West Farms, East Tremont, Soundview, Clason Point, and Bronx River. Arroyo came into office after 15 years of work in health administration in the public sector, and 8 years in the private sector.

[council.nyc.gov/d17/html/members/home.shtml](http://council.nyc.gov/d17/html/members/home.shtml)

## RICHARD BARBROOK

### The Net Bill of Rights

In the 21st century’s information society, personal freedom is now threatened by the intrusive attentions of both authoritarian states and monopolistic businesses. If liberty and democracy are to be enhanced within the Net, what is now required is an energetic public debate over how to construct a new constitutional settlement which nurtures today’s collective forms of digital citizenship. Platform co-ops need to take this into account when determining their own handling of the data generated by workers and employers alike. The sharing of information over the Net is a premonition of the democratization of the whole productive process. If they are to contribute to this collaborative endeavor, everyone must have access to the knowledge and technologies which will be used to build the emerging network society. Like its liberal and socialist predecessors, this new dispensation should be guided by its own rules of the game. The creation of a Net Bill of Rights codifies the mutually agreed upon principles for regulating individuals’ on-line activities in the common interest. By collectively defining a new vision of digital citizenship, this generation can make its own world-historical contribution towards building a truly human civilization. The better future must be anticipated in the troubled present. Let’s seize this opportunity to transform our utopian dreams into everyday life!

Richard Barbrook is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of West-

minster. In the early 1980s, he was involved with pirate and community radio broadcasting. Having worked on media regulation within the EU for some years at a research institute at the University of Westminster, much of his material was published in his 1995 book *Media Freedom*. Working with Andy Cameron, he wrote *The Californian Ideology* which was a pioneering critique of the neo-liberal politics of *Wired* magazine. His other important writings about the Net include: *The Hi-Tech Gift Economy*, *Cyber-communism*, *The Regulation of Liberty* and *The Class of the New*. The Media Ecology Association selected *Imaginary Futures* as the winner of the 2008 Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book of the Year in the Field of Media Ecology. In 2014, his book about Situationist gaming was published entitled *Class Wargames: Ludic Subversion Against Spectacular Capitalism*.

## VANESSA BARTH

**Toward Fair Digital Work: Perspectives from a German Labor Union**

This talk will discuss work in progress by IG Metall, the largest German labor union. The talk will have three parts. First, it will introduce the legal and institutional framework for the German model of co-determination. Co-determination law provides elected workers' councils with rights to information and consultation in managerial decisions, and reserves a fraction of supervisory board seats for elected representatives of workers. But the potential for worker power created by this law is typically

only realized through union activism. Digital labor poses challenges for union practice, including the classification of workers as contractors (who have no co-determination rights), the "disappearance" of the employer in platform-based labor, and the disintegration of the single physical work site where workers can meet face-to-face. The second part of the talk will outline research, outreach, and system design efforts under way at IG Metall that hope to meet these challenges, including [faircrowdwork.org](http://faircrowdwork.org), a platform rating site currently in public alpha. The talk will conclude with remarks on historical relations between cooperatives and the German labor movement.

Vanessa Barth, born 1969, lives in Frankfurt am Main where she works for IG Metall, the union for the German metal, electronics, textile, wood, and plastics industries. It is a major trend-setter in national bargaining. One of Barth's foci is the future development of digital work environments.

[igmetall.de](http://igmetall.de)

## MICHEL BAUWENS

**Platform Cooperativism In The Context Of Alternative Infrastructures For The Commons Economy**

The key drama of the transition of our times is that capital has understood much faster than the alternative political and economic forces that mutualization of knowledge and infrastructures was the order of the day, and by organizing extractive activities around our commoning and peer to peer exchanges. Platform cooperatives may be an interesting social market

alternative, but is it a commons-based alternative. The latter would require 'open cooperatives' that innovate in significant ways the traditional cooperative practices. In this talk we contextualize the need of open cooperatives in the context of other initiatives that aim to make commoning into viable eco-systems.

Michel Bauwens is a Belgian Peer-to-Peer theorist and an active writer, researcher and conference speaker on the subject of technology, culture and business innovation. Michel Bauwens is a theorist in the emerging field of P2P theory and director and founder of the P2P Foundation, a global organization of researchers working in collaboration in the exploration of peer production, governance, and property. He has authored a number of essays, including his seminal thesis *The Political Economy of Peer Production*.

[p2pfoundation.net](http://p2pfoundation.net)

## ROBERT BENJAMIN

**Member's Media**

Member's Media has a core mission to increase the quality, quantity, and valuation of independent narrative content as well as to seek greater input and user experience for the audience. To ensure it will remain true to all its founding principals and serve its community above all other interests, the organization was formed and incorporated as a multi-stakeholder "platform cooperative" whereby its Patron Member-Owners take on majority control and democratic governance.

Robert Benjamin is a writer, producer,

entrepreneur and ownership advocate. Frustrated with the bleak landscape facing independent narrative content and the rampant abuse of audiences across all media, Robert envisioned a new paradigm for how independent narrative media is developed, financed, produced, promoted, distributed, and ultimately enjoyed. He founded Member's Media, Ltd Cooperative to band together and empower the rightful heirs of tomorrow's media landscape. Think of a YouTube/Netflix owned by the filmmakers as well as the audience that supports them.

[membersmedia.net](http://membersmedia.net)

## YOCHAI BENKLER

**Peer Mutualism And The Future Of Capitalism**

Can mutualism impact the dynamics that have increased inequality and generalized insecurity since the mid-1970s, and that threaten to increase uncertainty and contingency in the coming decades? How can peer production contribute to the development of a practical path toward the fair organization of meaningful work and economic security?

Yochai Benkler is the Berkman Professor of Entrepreneurial Legal Studies at Harvard Law School, and faculty co-director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. Since the 1990s he has played a role in characterizing the role of information commons and decentralized collaboration to innovation, information production, and freedom in the networked economy and society. His books include *The Wealth of Networks: How Social*

*Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (Yale University Press 2006), which won academic awards from the American Political Science Association, the American Sociological Association, and the McGannon award for social and ethical relevance in communications. In 2012 he received a lifetime achievement award from Oxford University in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the study and public understanding of the Internet and information goods. His work is socially engaged, winning him the Ford Foundation Visionaries Award in 2011, the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Pioneer Award for 2007, and the Public Knowledge IP3 Award in 2006. It is also anchored in the realities of markets, cited as "perhaps the best work yet about the fast moving, enthusiast-driven Internet" by the Financial Times and named best business book about the future in 2006 by Strategy and Business. Benkler has advised governments and international organizations on innovation policy and telecommunications, and serves on the boards or advisory boards of several nonprofits engaged in working towards an open society.

[www.benkler.org](http://www.benkler.org)

## JANINE BERG

Janine Berg is Senior Economist with the Conditions of Work and Equality Department of the International Labour Office. She received her Ph.D. in economics from The New School for Social Research in New York. She will discuss platform cooperativism from an economist's perspective. Fundamentally, she is concerned with income security for

gig economy workers. She notes that simply establishing alternative social security systems for 1099 workers is not sufficient, as the fundamental problem is the lack of a minimum wage. She will argue that the lack of wage floors will also plague the co-ops unless they can secure a monopoly on the market. Many of these jobs, she notes, need to be recognized as waged employment and then be subject to minimum wage provisions, regardless of whether the job is supplied through a platform coop or a traditional corporation. Her critique presents the possibilities and limits of cooperativism, focusing on ensuring income security for workers.

## ANNA BERNASEK

### My User Agreement

Consumers don't have to settle for aggressively one-sided user agreements proffered on a take it or leave it basis. Finally there's something ordinary people can do to protect their rights. In just a few simple steps, at [myuseragreement.com](http://myuseragreement.com), consumers can adopt terms and conditions of their own. Using established legal principles, My User Agreement provides an innovative solution to a vexing problem. When enough people get behind this approach, it will be impossible for companies to ignore. The more people who sign up, the stronger our protections will be. My User Agreement represents a new model for collective action with broad applications. By harnessing the power of the Internet, ordinary people can change the terms of commerce worldwide. The approach we are pioneering has important implications for the labor and environmental movements as well

as many other areas.

Anna Bernasek is a journalist and author covering economics and business. She has held staff positions at *Fortune*, *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australian Financial Review* and has been a long time contributor to *The New York Times*. Her writing has appeared in publications worldwide, including *The Washington Post*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Huffington Post*, *Salon*, *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera America* and *The Times of India*. She has appeared as a panelist and guest on broadcast media including CNN, NBC, CNBC, public television and National Public Radio. Bernasek's newest book, *All You Can Pay: How Companies Use Our Data to Empty Our Wallets* (Nation Books 2015) co-authored with D.T. Mongan, reveals what companies do with our data and what we can do about it. Her first book, *The Economics of Integrity* (Harper Collins 2010) shows how integrity and trust are at the heart of how we create wealth. Bernasek holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Michigan and a Masters in Public Policy from Princeton University. She divides her time between New York City and the east end of Long Island.

[myuseragreement.com](http://myuseragreement.com)

## ZENAYDA BONILLA

### Golden Steps Elder Care Cooperative

Bonilla came to this work after caring for her grandmother who had Alzheimer's and her father who died of cancer. This work requires a person who loves working with seniors. It requires patience, compassion, being able to

listen, and being able to empathize deeply, to understand and care for our clients. What she enjoys most about being part of Golden Steps is working in a group and feeling enriched as a person, and of course offering services to seniors. She has grown in her abilities through the support of training provided to members and enjoys the cultural exchange and sharing cultural roots.

Zenayda Bonilla was born in El Salvador and has been part of Golden Steps Elder Care Cooperative for two years.

[facebook.com/GoldenStepsCoop](http://facebook.com/GoldenStepsCoop)

## FRANCESCA BRIA

Francesca Bria is a senior researcher and policy advisor working at the intersection of technology policy, socio-economic analysis and innovation strategy. She has over 15 years of experience advising public administrations and companies on science, technology and innovation policy. Francesca works as a Nesta Senior Project Lead at the Nesta Innovation Lab, where she is the EU Coordinator of the D-CENT project and the Principal Investigator of the DSI project on digital social innovation in Europe, as part of the EU CAPS program. She has a background in social science and innovation economics with a PhD from Imperial College London, where she was a Researcher and Teaching Associate in the Innovation Studies Centre- Digital Economy Lab. Francesca is a member of the Internet of Things Council and an advisor for the European Commission on Future Internet and Smart Cities policy. She is also a member of the EC Expert Group on Open Innovation (OISPG) and a member of the

European Research Cluster on the Internet of Things (IERC). She is also active in various grassroots social movements advocating for open access, knowledge and data commons and decentralized privacy-aware technologies.

## BRAD BURNHAM

### Whose Data?

The rapid concentration of market power in the largest Internet services is a market failure, but it's not the result of a fundamental flaw in markets. It is the result of a misunderstanding of who "owns" the data. Is it Facebook's, or Facebook's users'? Is it Uber's, or Uber's drivers'? Control over this data is the source of network-effect market power and the root cause our concerns about privacy, personal agency, and even income disparity. Some look to the state to address these market failures, but they are asking the state to address the symptoms, not the problem. Worse, it is likely to exacerbate the problem by further strengthening Uber's market position. Instead, we should work towards a shared understanding of what a property right in data means. Getting it right will allow for the decentralized, emergent innovation that markets are so good at. We have not even begun to debate whose data it is. It is time to start.

Brad Burnham is a managing partner at Union Square Ventures. He started working in information technology with AT&T in 1979. Brad spun Echo Logic out of Bell Laboratories in 1989 and joined AT&T Ventures in 1993. Brad co-founded TACODA in 2001 before joining Fred to create Union Square Ventures in 2003.

Brad majored in political science at Wesleyan University. He is married with two kids and lives in New York City.

## XTINE BURROUGH

### Remediation in Digital Labor

Remediation in Digital Labor is an ongoing collaboration with Turkers (mTurk.com virtual laborers) for a critical and poetic understanding of the self as virtual employee or employer. She has hired the Turkers to pause from physical labor, to respond to the Federal Trade Commission's workshop about the sharing economy, and to imagine their dream-platform for virtual labor. She is interested in collecting the Turkers' thoughts, but is also hopeful that by hiring the workers to share thoughts about their role in mTurk she is encouraging self- and system-awareness in this digital laborer community. In this presentation she will share her findings with the Turkers, from the mundane to the unexpected. Her role as a virtual employer, and curious purveyor of digital culture, will also be part of the conversation.

Xtine is a new media artist and educator. She has authored or edited several books including *Foundations of Digital Art and Design* (2013), *Net Works: Case Studies in Web Art and Design* (2011), and *The Routledge Companion to Remix Studies* (2015). She has co-authored other works and contributed chapters and articles to anthologies and scholarly journals. Informed by the history of conceptual art, she uses social networking, databases, search engines, blogs, and applications in combination with popular sites like Facebook, YouTube, or

Mechanical Turk, to create web communities promoting interpretation and autonomy. Xtine is passionate about creating works using digital tools to translate common experiences into personal arenas for discovery. She is a Webby Honoree, has received a Terminal commission and an award from the UK Big Lottery fund. An Associate Professor of Emerging Media at UT Dallas, she bridges the gap between histories, theories, and production in new media education.

[www.missconceptions.net/mediations/statement.html](http://www.missconceptions.net/mediations/statement.html)

## SUSIE CAGLE

### Reorganizing Independent Media Labor

The internet promised the dawn of a new age of independent media, with democratized and low-cost access to publishing. But as it did in other industries, the internet disrupted legacy companies and distributed power only to create opportunity for new platforms to recentralize control and profits. Today, "content" is thriving while writers, especially freelancers, are losing. New platforms such as Contently and Beacon have emerged to "save journalism" and ostensibly help freelancers harness their distributed audiences through crowdfunding, promotion, and gig-matching. But these middlemen do as much for writers as Uber does for its drivers: They are payments processors backed by venture capital, with a primary goal of providing subsidized labor to large media organizations. This is very bad. But independent media makers are resisting this centralization through

radical wage transparency (Who Pays Writers) and formal and informal collective organizing (Radiotopia and coworking guilds). Still in their infancy, these efforts could prove to be an alternative platform model that recaptures some of the internet's lost promise.

Susie Cagle is a 2015-2016 John S. Knight Journalism fellow at Stanford, where she researches labor shifts, their social and economic impacts, and sustainable cooperative models to support freelance workers in media and other industries. She is a technology columnist and cartoonist at Pacific Standard and Al Jazeera America, and a frequent contributor of journalism to other outlets including the Guardian, Forbes, Aeon, and others. Her work has been honored with awards from the Online Journalism Association, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the Yerba Buena Center. She often draws Uber CEO Travis Kalanick as a crying baby.

## ROBIN CHASE

### Peers, Inc.

How we finance platforms matters, since the financiers ultimately create the rules of engagement for those who choose to use them. What are the realistic options? A good platform makes the complex simple and gives people the power of the corporation. A good platform grows faster, learns faster, and adapts faster than the competition, and therefore it tends toward monopoly. Good platforms are also very difficult to build—most fail—and costs non-trivial amounts of money. So, what are the financing options? What is a possible path ahead?

Robin Chase is a transportation entrepreneur. She is co-founder and former CEO of Zipcar, the largest carsharing company in the world; Buzzcar, a peer to peer carsharing service in France (now merged with Drivy); and GoLoco, an online ridesharing community. She is also co-founder and Executive Chairman of Veniam, a vehicle communications company building the networking fabric for the Internet of Moving Things. Robin recently authored *Peers Inc: How People and Platforms are Inventing the Collaborative Economy and Reinventing Capitalism*.

[robinchase.org/#every-day-create-the-world-you-want-to-live-in](http://robinchase.org/#every-day-create-the-world-you-want-to-live-in)

## MIRIAM CHERRY

### Legal and Technical Challenges of Starting Worker Coops In The On-Demand Digital Economy

Miriam Cherry's analysis centers on the legal and technical challenges of starting worker coops in the on-demand digital economy. In order to do so, she draws on her work assisting traditional worker cooperatives and worker-owned limited liability companies (LLCs) to organize and run their businesses. Worker coops require more technical, legal, and financial assistance than traditional startup corporations because of their relatively "unusual" business structures, governance models, and collective action problems. How might platform coops be able to reduce these various transaction costs? She will suggest (perhaps subversively) that technology may provide the means to help overcome these challenges.

Professor Miriam Cherry's scholarship

is interdisciplinary and focuses on the intersection of technology and globalization with business, contract, and employment law topics. In her recent work, Professor Cherry analyzes crowd funding, markets for corporate social responsibility, virtual work, and social entrepreneurship. Professor Cherry's articles will appear or have appeared in the Northwestern Law Review, Minnesota Law Review, Washington Law Review, Illinois Law Review, Georgia Law Review, Alabama Law Review, Maryland Law Review, and the Tulane Law Review, among others.

## JUSTIN CRANSHAW

### Toward A Generalizable Worker-Centric Peer Economy Platform

Over the last few years, we at Microsoft Research FUSE Labs have been doing and funding academic research on the "Sharing Economy." Recently, we have been working with labor organizations on the design and implementation of a generalizable worker-centric peer economy platform, which would enable groups of workers to own, operate, and control the software that bridges service providers with those seeking their service. Our goal is to do for on-demand service marketplaces what Wordpress did for blogging, empowering labor organizations to control the means of production by determining the parameters and algorithms that govern peer economy markets.

Justin Cranshaw is a social computing researcher at Microsoft Research. His work focuses on the emerging multi-disciplinary area of urban computing, which seeks to better

understand and better engage with urban processes through new forms of ubiquitous and social computation. He is particularly interested in how distributed labor platforms are impacting and transforming urban life. Justin was a recipient of the Facebook Graduate Fellow in Human-Computer Interaction in 2013. His work on the Livehoods Project received a best paper award at ICWSM 2012 and was covered by the Wall Street Journal, the CBC, Fast Company, Wired, and others.

[fuse.microsoft.com/about](http://fuse.microsoft.com/about)

## RA CRISCIELLO

### Union Worker Cooperatives, Portable Benefits, and On-Demand App-Based Dispatch

As Uber faces profound 1099 problems and the sharing economy has largely grown into an anti-union enterprise, new employment models must emerge that are truly worker-owned and that allow for collective employment. In the healthcare setting, low-wage hospital workers are often de-skilled and unionization is difficult. A new, more flexible workforce is possible. The union worker cooperative generates a productive workforce through meaningful and flexible employment, leverages collective buying power to purchase employee healthcare insurance on scale, insulates healthcare employers from the challenges and costs of re-training and layoffs that would instead be handled inside the cooperative, and grows the healthcare workforce by providing training and apprenticeship opportunities. This new model also moves unionized labor away from entrenched and anti-

quated labor-relations, shifting power as well as shifting what it means to collectivize labor and bargain its value. Ra Crisciello is a Lead Research Analyst at SEIU-UHW in Oakland, California, a union of 80,000 healthcare workers. She is also a union-side labor attorney. She is building an innovative employment model that collectivizes the employment status of unionized workers on scale. In the new worker-driven democratic landscape, her model allows for on-demand labor without compromising traditional union values.

## MAX DANA

### External Revenue Service

The External Revenue Service is a peer-to-peer tax system designed to make it easier for people to share their disposable income with the people, organizations, and causes they care about most. ERS members pledge a percentage of their annual income to a portfolio of recipients, and recipient members receive monthly contributions from the members who have elected to be taxed by them. One of the core values of the External Revenue Service is radical generosity, so for these receivers there is just one catch: in order to receive, you must first be a giver. At the External Revenue Service, everyone's a philanthropist.

Max Dana is a Brooklyn-based artist-turned-programmer-turned-entrepreneur and founder of the External Revenue Service. He currently serves as manager of technology development and operations for ArtsPool, a member-owned cooperative

he co-founded in 2014 to provide shared administrative services to New York arts nonprofits. His path from art to finance began in 2013 when he led the Economics and Finance research team of the Brooklyn Commune Project, a grassroots initiative to create an artist-driven vision of a healthy arts ecosystem in America and to bring artists, institutions, administrators and funders together to discuss difficult topics such as resource allocation, capital, value, labor, aesthetics, and quality of life.

[medium.com/orbital-nycschematic-for-a-generosity-engine-e373d076275f](https://medium.com/orbital-nycschematic-for-a-generosity-engine-e373d076275f)

## JOSHUA DANIELSON

### Loconomics

Launching in beta this fall, Loconomics is an on-demand marketplace for clients to book local services (housecleaning, tutoring, massage therapy, etc.) and for service professionals to have the tools and technology needed to run their own business. While virtually all “sharing” economy platforms are currently owned by venture capitalists, Loconomics is structured as a freelancer and employee-owned cooperative with innovative bylaws written by Janelle Orsi (Sustainable Economies Law Center). Service professionals elect the board and pay a monthly user fee to fund the business team that oversees the marketing and operations of the platform.

Joshua Danielson is the co-founder and CEO of Loconomics Cooperative, Inc. based in San Francisco. As an early adopter of the “sharing” economy (an Airbnb host since 2010, an owner

on car-sharing platforms, and user of many others), he understands both the inner workings and the power these platforms possess to create economic empowerment for their users. His professional background includes pricing and revenue management, analytics, product strategy and management, contract negotiations, and voice of the customer programs primarily in the travel industry. He holds an MBA from IESE Business School (Barcelona) and a Bachelor of Science in Business from the University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management.

[loconomics.com/en-US](https://loconomics.com/en-US)

## ANDREA DEHLENDORF

Andrea Dehendorf is the Co-Executive Director of the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart), a key driver in a new, dynamic movement of low-wage workers that is changing the national conversation about low-wage work and winning concrete victories. OUR Walmart has used an innovative on-line-to-field organizing model that has leveraged technology and social media to build a network of over 50,000 Walmart workers and develop a base of leaders and activists who are changing working conditions at the nation’s largest employer.

Prior to her work with OUR Walmart, Andrea was the Assistant Director of SEIU’s Property Service Division and the Executive Vice President and Organizing Director of SEIU United Services Workers West (USWW), an organization of property services worker in California that has organized and secured health care and living wages

for 40,000 janitors, security officers, higher education and airport workers. For 11 years Andrea led organizing for Justice for Janitors and Airport Workers United campaigns in California, which brought over 10,000 new workers into the union.

[forrespect.org](https://forrespect.org)

## JOEL DIETZ

### Swarm

Swarm has been engaged in the task of enabling community ownership by means of a new type of legal entity, the “Distributed Collaborative Organization,” which allows the community to own the result by means of shares issued on a distributed ledger. Last year Swarm raised approximately \$1 million in a crowdfunding campaign on its own platform and since has been heads-down working on legal issues.

Joel Dietz is an activist, technological architect, and legal hacker. He is known primarily for his innovations around “cryptoequity,” a technology he believes can enable wide spread community-ownership and distributed wealth. Joel is also the founder of Swarm.

[swarm.fund](https://swarm.fund)

## JOHN DUDA

### Anchoring Cooperativism

If we’re serious about platform cooperatives as a way to help build a more democratic economy, we need to tackle the challenges of scale, inclusion, and empowerment. What can we learn from the parallel waves of efforts unfolding across the country to reorient local

economic development towards more cooperative and community based solutions? How can policy, investment, education, and organizing align to build robust and resilient economic alternatives? What are the strategies that can anchor and keep capital recirculating inside cooperative and community-based economies? How can we insure that cooperative-based alternatives work to confront and reverse decades of displacement and disinvestment rather than just distributing economic privilege a little more equally?

John Duda is the Communications Director at the Democracy Collaborative, a national research and advocacy institute dedicated to building a next system grounded in community wealth and a democratized economy. He is also a founding member and the lead software developer at Red Emma’s, a worker cooperative radical bookstore and cafe in Baltimore, and a founding board member of BASE: Baltimore Activating Solidarity Economies. His research work has focused on how the idea of “self-organization” has informed and connected political and technical imaginaries.

[democracycollaborative.org](https://democracycollaborative.org)

## THOMAS DÖNNEBRINK

### European Experiments With Worker Ownership And Self-Governance

The P2P nature of the front-end of “sharing economy” platforms is helping users to fulfill their needs; therefore it should be supported. The traditional, venture capital-sponsored, neoliberal back-end of those platforms, however, extracts data and concentrates profits

in the hands of the few, which makes it hardly worthy of our support. This talk will provide examples of European experiments with worker ownership and self-governance, demanding that stakeholders should become shareholders and that governments, cities, or foundations should step up and champion these public interest projects.

Thomas Döennebrink is OuiShare Connector Germany and freelancer in the collaborative economy. He was trained as a language teacher and later became the founding CEO and Headmaster of the German Embassy School in Izmir, Turkey. Now based in Berlin, he is interested in the collaborative economy, especially from the angle of its prospective contribution to new, sustainable and human economy and society. Today, Döennebrink is involved in the "OuiShare Sharitories" project and interested in Sharing Cities. In this and other contexts and networks he is involved in the convergence of ideas, networks, and movements that aim at having an impact on changing the world for the better. As a freelancer, he is involved in convening events, research projects, workshops, presentations, and lectures. He also consults on topics in the collaborative economy.

@TDoennebrink

## RICHARD FAY

### Cooperative Content Corporation

CCC is developing a platform to support multiple user-generated content sites. Users of these sites will be incentivized to create and submit content and engage with the content through a cooperative model of profit-sharing and

ownership. Users will be able to see in real-time the equity and cash dividends their contributions have generated. Our algorithm will distribute compensation to our users (in cash and/or equity) according to the amount of engagement they drive. Profits will generally be retained by the company for reinvestment, though a periodic dividend may be paid to users. Initially revenue will be generated through ads; however, further down the line, sales of physical goods may be introduced. The site will initially launch with a number of verticals marketed under separate domain names.

Richard Fay has an extensive background in private equity and currently works with AlpRidge Capital, leveraging his experience involving all aspects of transaction sourcing, execution and portfolio management, and working with boards. Prior to joining AlpRidge, Richard established the North American office for the Eastern Horizon Group which is the principal investment arm for a German family that owns and operates companies with values in excess of 2 billion euros. Prior to EHG, Richard worked for Kidd & Company, a private equity firm focused on the lower middle-market where he was responsible for sourcing, structuring and arranging financing for deals. Before working at Kidd & Company, Richard worked for Morgan Stanley, BNP Paribas and Sanford Bernstein. Richard holds an MBA from Cornell University, a master's in financial economics from Oxford University, and a bachelor's in economics from Carnegie Mellon University.

## MATAN FIELD

### Backfeed

Backfeed develops the platform and infrastructure for large-scale, decentralized corporations of any kind, making it a universal basis for platform cooperativism. It contributes to the development of blockchain-based platforms by providing a set of economic and collaborative protocols—including a p2p value-distribution and reputation system, which is an economic incentive model for the indirect coordination of agents—and a platform for a collaborative network of networks. Backfeed helps make possible a new economic framework in which collaboration is the winning strategy.

Matan Field is a theoretical physicist, entrepreneur, and activist. For a decade, Matan has researched string theory—the “theory of everything”—for which he earned his PhD from the Weizmann Institute of Science. Meanwhile, he founded an organic-food cooperative in Jerusalem and became increasingly curious about alternative economies and organizational structures. In 2013, Matan founded La’Zooz, a decentralized ride-sharing network, which was itself developed through a decentralized process and one of the earliest Decentralized Application (DApp) projects based on blockchain technology. This project helped him identify some of the missing links for a scalable evolution of the decentralized movement, which led him to found Backfeed in 2015. Matan believes in connecting science and technology with social values and economics in order to promote a sustainable, wealthy, and healthy society.

[backfeed.cc](http://backfeed.cc)

## OMAR FREILLA

### The Co-op Academy

Omar will talk about the growing worker cooperative movement in NYC and what's involved in starting a worker cooperative. He will discuss the opportunities available to anyone who wants to start a worker cooperative, focusing on the Co-op Academy, a cooperative business boot camp for worker co-op startups run by Green Worker Cooperatives that takes place twice a year in the Bronx.

Omar Freilla founded Green Worker Cooperatives out of his love for personal and community transformation, a passion for democracy and the environment, and a commitment to blazing trails and making another world possible. Omar has over 12 years of experience in business development focusing on cooperatives and green business with an equal number of years as a social justice organizer and advocate focusing on challenging environmental racism, economic injustice, and sexism. He co-curated the New York City portion of the BMW Guggenheim Lab, a project of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. His writings have appeared in numerous books, blogs, and articles and he has been featured in several documentaries, including Leonardo DiCaprio's environmental documentary "The 11th Hour." Omar has received numerous awards for his work, including the Rockefeller Foundation's Jane Jacobs Medal for New Ideas and Activism and has been featured in Ebony Magazine's annual Power 100 list and The Root 100. He holds a Masters degree in Environmental Science from Miami University of Ohio and a B.S.

from Morehouse College, where he also founded the organization Black Men for the Eradication of Sexism. Omar also enjoys making things grow as a loving father, husband and gardener.

[greenworker.coop](http://greenworker.coop)

## NOEMI GISZPENC

### Data Commons Cooperative

Formed in 2012 after several years of development, the DCC brings together a range of “data-sharing” members, from small grassroots groups to national umbrella organizations, in a structure that allows collaborative gathering, sharing, and maintenance of information on the emerging “alternative” economy. By pooling resources, our members can publicize and use all kinds of data on co-ops, credit unions, community gardens, alternative currencies, and other enterprises, more easily, cheaply, and effectively. The DCC offers tools, platforms, and guidelines to support sharing.

Noemi Giszpenc is one of the founders of the Data Commons Cooperative, and the founder of the Regional Index of Cooperation, a precursor of the Data Commons. She is on the board of the DCC, representing the Cooperative Development Institute, a cooperative business assistance organization serving the Northeast U.S. (New England and New York).

[datacommons.coop](http://datacommons.coop)

## MARINA GORBIS

### Designing a Generation of Positive Platforms

Platforms are the new operating system for how we create value and get things done in this connected and highly data-driven environment. This new operating system has produced some great and some not-so-great outcomes, like all technologies. The same platforms that are eliminating middle-class jobs might be deployed to support decent wages through more efficient work-matching, democratized access to means of production, collective leveraging of resources, and greater alignment of platform owners’ and workers’ incentives. Design of platforms can affect their potential positive and negative externalities. What can we do at the level of design that is embedded in technologies themselves to ensure positive outcomes? One of the goals of the Institute for the Future Workable Future Initiative is to engage designers, economists, and policy experts to think about what a generation of Positive Platforms would look like and how we can use the levers we have—from governance and ownership, to funding and technology design choices—to build a new generation of Positive Platforms.

Marina Gorbis is the Executive Director of the Institute for the Future, a non-profit research and consulting organization based in Silicon Valley. She has brought a futures perspective to hundreds of organizations in business, education, government and philanthropy. Marina has blogged and written for BoingBoing.net, FastCompany and other major media outlets, and is a fre-

quent speaker on future organizational, technology, and social issues. Marina’s current research focus is social production and how it is changing the face of major industries, a topic explored in detail in her 2013 book *The Nature of the Future: Dispatches from the Socialstructured World*. Recently Marina and a group of colleagues launched the Workable Futures Initiative at the Institute for the Future with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of new work patterns and to prototyping a generation of Positive Platforms for work.

[@mgorbis](http://@mgorbis)

[iftf.org](http://iftf.org)

## KAREN GREGORY

Karen Gregory is a Lecturer in Digital Sociology at the University of Edinburgh. Her research focuses on the entanglement of contemporary spirituality, labor precarity, and entrepreneurialism, with an emphasis on the role of the laboring body. She is the co-editor of the forthcoming book *Digital Sociologies* (Policy Press) and her work has been published in Women’s Studies Quarterly, Women and Performance, The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy, and Contexts.

## PETER HARRIS

### Resonate

Resonate is a music streaming service which will be run as a worker/consumer cooperative. Stories in the media abound about unjust royalty practices in the music streaming

world, driven by complex, secretive deals between major labels and online platforms. Resonate aims to solve the fundamental problem of fair payments by creating transparent accounting systems, while addressing other key issues regarding direct connections between musicians and fans. The core software will be developed using an open source model while seeking crowd participation on the marketing, features and content development side. Can we in the platform co-op community build global, decentralized workforces outside the standard investor paradigm that dictates development and channels profits to a select few? How can software developers, marketing specialists, industry consultants, designers and bloggers equitably participate across a diverse spectrum of non-cash rewards for casual involvement versus salaries for full-time employment? We at Resonate are exploring those issues while building a music streaming platform by and for the people.

Peter Harris has been a web developer since 1997, building countless websites across a wide range of trades, with a particular focus on the creative arts. Having witnessed the rise and fall of numerous platforms, services and technologies, he feels it’s time to usher in a new phase – one in which crowds benefit from their contributions, in stark contrast to the hierarchical, centralized models currently dominating the web. Having worked on numerous websites for a broad spectrum of musicians – from multi-platinum selling artists to struggling independents – a constant focus of the last 15 years has been on the problems artists face with regards

to royalties, distribution and fan retention. These issues find their solution in Resonate, a project Peter is coordinating from his adopted home of Berlin, Germany.

[resonate.is](http://resonate.is)

## SCOTT HEIFERMAN

Scott Heiferman is Founder and CEO of Meetup, an organization dedicated to 21st century community organizing. Millions of people in over 100 countries now use Meetup to self-organize local community groups of all kinds, with thousands of Meetups (real community meetings) happening daily. Scott believes that everyone can benefit from a support group or community group.

[meetup.com](http://meetup.com)

## SARA HOROWITZ

### **Building New Supports For the New Workforce: The Role of Solidarity and New Labor Institutions**

Both government institutions and the private sector have been charged with promoting social welfare. However, in the modern economy, neither has proven quite up to the task. In recent years, we've witnessed the breakdown of the New Deal-era social contract and its hard-won worker protections. At the same time, we've seen the ability of government to provide essential services wane, and the political power once afforded to unified labor give way to a staunch individualism. Historically, labor unions and mutual aid organizations mobilized large worker factions to protect institutions that delivered sustainable benefits to their commun-

ties. Built on solidarity, these organizations could effectively leverage market and political power on behalf of their constituencies. Today, as the workforce is diversified and peer networks transform social and market structures, we see new labor movements emerge to address workers' needs, from Fight for \$15 to the proliferation of new cooperative models. This panel will examine the role labor institutions can play in providing social welfare to workers.

Sara Horowitz, who has deep family ties to traditional labor organizing, has resurrected and modernized a nineteenth century form of labor organizing—the mutual aid society—and updated it for today's freelance workers. Through advocacy, education, and the provision of services (particularly health insurance) the Freelancers Union offers a path forward for workers who lack established identities and benefits derived from being employees of a particular firm.

[freelancersunion.org](http://freelancersunion.org)

## PEDRO JARDIM

### **CoLiga**

Imagine a world without traditional companies—where people come together, where leftovers become resources, where a spare hour becomes babysitting or therapy, where the needs of the world are filled by enterprising people and labor is unchained. CoLiga has the vision to make it possible for anyone to create a local on-demand service company and empower a global community of local service providers. We offer a “platform-as-a-service” that allows people to create local market-

places that empower individual, small, and medium-sized service companies while enabling cooperatives and more distributed governance.

Pedro Jardim—a native of São Paulo, Brazil, now based in Berlin—works as a business activator around collaborative lifestyles in online and offline community building. He is a co-founder of Agora, Coliga, Apoio, and the Berlin Future Forum. Pedro researches self-organization, collaboration in online and offline community building, methodologies of facilitation, approaches to combine low risk investment and low barrier of entry to space, community, education and social mobility, fostering cultures of collaboration, sustainability and more distributed society.

[coliga.us](http://coliga.us)

## MJ KAPLAN

### **Loomio**

Loomio is a digital tool that makes it easy for anyone, anywhere to contribute to decisions that affect them. By enabling online collaborative decision making, Loomio empowers communities, social movements and organizations to co-create thriving and equitable futures. Our users span nearly 100 countries and include movement activists, coops, large nonprofits, governments and nearly any type of group you can imagine in search of inclusive agreement and action. When we launched Loomio, we wanted the organization to be as disruptive as the tool, reflecting our core values as a community driven cooperative: user-driven design, open source code,

transparent, and independent. Loomio is supported by those who pay according to their means to keep the platform free of advertising and accessible to groups with no money. We're a worker owned cooperative and, as we grow, we envision multiple stakeholders having active, multi-faceted roles. We're exploring investment models that tap our global users to support and help create what they value. We're keen to experiment with a growth models based on shared value—after all, collaboration is at the heart of what we do and who we are.

MJ Kaplan guides US Growth for Loomio, a worker cooperative based in New Zealand that produces a platform for democratic decision-making. Based in Providence, RI, she is an adjunct professor at Brown University and teaches an award-winning action learning class in social enterprise (Cordes Innovation Fellowship, Asoka U) as well as a class in strategy. MJ founded Kaplan Consulting in 2000, a national firm focused on strategic alignment and partnerships. She was a consultant for the Institute for Conservation Leadership for over 20 years, supporting environmental agencies in board and leadership development, strategy and collaboration. In 2012, MJ traveled to Guatemala with Leading Women to contribute support for Amigos de Santa Cruz, a rural center working on micro-enterprise. Before launching Kaplan Consulting, MJ had leadership organization development roles in the private, public and nonprofit sectors. MJ serves on the Board for Commerce RI, the state's economic development

agency and she is a trustee of Social Enterprise Greenhouse. She previously served as a board leader at The Miriam Hospital and Moses Brown School. MJ earned her M.Ed. from Harvard University and her B.A. from Brown University.

## DMYTRI KLEINER

### A Proposal For "Venture Communism"

A Venture Commune is a joint stock corporation, much like the Venture Capital Funds of the Capitalist class, however it has four distinct properties which transform it into an effective vehicle for revolutionary worker's struggle:

- I. A Share In The Venture Commune Can Only Be Acquired By Contributions Of Labor, and Not Property.
- II. The Venture Commune's Return On Investment From Its Enterprises Is Derived From Rent and Not Income.
- III. The Venture Commune Is Owned Equally By All Its Members.
- IV. All Those Who Apply Their Labor To the Property of the Commune Must Be Eligible For Membership In The Commune.

Dmytri Kleiner is a software developer and the author of *The Telekommunist Manifesto*. Dmytri is a contributing artist to the Miscommunication Technologies continuing series of artworks by Telekommunisten, such as deadSwap, Thimbl, R15N and OCTO. Miscommunication Technologies address the social relations embedded in communications platforms by bringing aspects which

are normally hidden from view to the foreground to be critically experienced and confronted. In *The Telekommunist Manifesto*, Kleiner has published the Peer-Production license, a commons-friendly license the author has described as CopyFarLeft, and proposed Venture Communism, a mode of worker-controlled production modeled on peer networks and the pastoral commons.

[dmytri.info](http://dmytri.info)

## ADAM KONNER

### Creating a Democratic Money System with Local Currencies and Other Alternatives

Many people think of money as neutral—just a medium of exchange. However our money system is built on debt, deepens inequality and competition, and drives the destruction of the environment. In this workshop we will reveal and discuss some of the problems with the mainstream money system giving rise to the need for new kinds of money and payment. We will see how many communities around the world are taking control of their economies with local currencies, timebanks and other alternative systems. We will also present rCredits, a digital democratic currency and payment system you can start organizing in your community today.

Adam "Fuzzy" Konner likes to start things. He is a worker co-op developer and consultant with Collective Seeds Consulting Co-op, a worker co-op he helped start. He works as a web and database developer and is a worker-owner of Sassafras Tech Collective, another worker co-op he helped start.

He is also working with The Working World, an international organization that provides loans and technical assistance to worker co-ops in Latin America and the US, to create a crowdfunding website for worker co-ops everywhere. He is one of the founders of The Hive, a housing co-op in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he currently lives.

[sassafras.coop](http://sassafras.coop)

## STEVEN LEE

### WageForward

Digital marketplace platforms like AirBNB and TaskRabbit are shining a spotlight on the "sharing economy," using technology to enable the sharing of assets, skills, and time. The benefits from these platforms are very clear for users and shareholders, but less so for workers, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. To help unlock the promise of the "sharing economy" for low-income New Yorkers, the Robin Hood Foundation intends to create a new online marketplace for tasks and part-time work, tentatively named WageForward. The platform's workforce would be comprised entirely of low-income New Yorkers who are under- or unemployed and who may otherwise not have the traditional measures of trustworthiness (credit rating, documentation) to participate in existing online marketplaces. Community-based organizations and existing co-ops will serve as intermediaries to source and "endorse" these workers. The platform will guarantee worker protections that may otherwise be unavailable to this population, including a livable wage, insurance, and benefits. The record of

work performed and ratings received would help members build work history and move towards other careers, if they so wish. The platform would offer back-office support (scheduling, tax advisory) and use the workers' aggregate purchasing power to serve as a purchasing cooperative.

Steven Lee is the Managing Director of Income Security at Robin Hood, a non-profit foundation that targets poverty in New York City by applying sound investment principles to philanthropy. In this role, Steven oversees \$40 million in grants in the areas of workforce development, micro-lending, legal counseling, financial services, access to benefits, technology, and social venture financing. Prior to joining Robin Hood, Steven was an Engagement Manager at Boston Consulting Group, a strategy consulting firm, providing strategic advice to Fortune 500 companies. Prior to BCG, Steven founded EduSmart Online, an educational software company. Prior to founding EduSmart, Steven practiced corporate law at Latham & Watkins in San Francisco. He holds a B.A. and a J.D. degree from Duke University, as well as an M.B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley.

[robinhood.org](http://robinhood.org)

## LAURA Y. LIU

Laura Y. Liu is Associate Professor of Urban Studies at Eugene Lang College, The New School. Her research focuses on community organizing; urban social justice; immigrant communities; race, gender, and labor politics, and the relationship between methodology and epistemology in activism. She has writ-

ten on the connection between geography and industry in the art exhibit Anne Wilson: Wind/Rewind/Weave (2011); the influence of digital technologies on urban space in Situated Technologies Pamphlets 7: From Mobile Playgrounds to Sweatshop City (2010, with Trebor Scholz); and the impact of September 11 on Chinatown (Indefensible Space, 2007, Ed. Michael Sorkin). Her articles have appeared in *Urban Geography*; *Gender, Place, and Culture*; and *Social and Cultural Geography*. Liu is writing a book, *Sweatshop City*, which looks at the continuing relevance of the sweatshop in Chinatown, New York City, and other post-Fordist, globalized contexts.

## ALFREDO LOPEZ

### Cooperation Against Surveillance

There can be no successful use of the Internet by progressive cooperative projects without a full guarantee of privacy and protection from data collection. Invasive authorities, like the NSA, will undoubtedly focus their data-collection efforts on cooperative ventures in general because there is a high probability that movement activists will be involved in these projects and in supporting and collaborating with them. This is most true of tech co-ops, who are at the center of Internet activism and are already a major surveillance target. For our movement for change to succeed, technology coops must be able to function freely with full interaction between themselves and the rest of us because it is that interaction (between them and, specifically, our movements) that guarantees humanity a future. The government spying and disrupting makes that impossible.

Alfredo Lopez, a veteran activist and writer, is a founder and member of the Leadership Committee of May First/People Link, the country's largest progressive Internet membership organization. Alfredo is the original designer and coordinator of MF/PL's People of Color Techie Training Project. He has been an organizer of several major national demonstrations and scores of smaller ones; an editor of two publications (Claridad and Sevendays Magazine); a radio and television producer (and host); a college teacher; and the author of six published books and hundreds of published articles. He lives in Brooklyn.

[mayfirst.org](http://mayfirst.org)

## KANYI MAQUBELA

### The Next Platforms

In the world of finance, we at Collaborative Fund believe that new capital flows will emerge across the consumer finance sector: from microinsurance, UBI insurance and p2p insurance to p2p lending, pooled saving and investing mechanisms, and equity crowdfunding. These services will emerge as platforms, and will power large swaths of value creation in the next phase of the internet. They will be very thin, can very likely be crowd-owned, and traditional financiers are going to have to both get used to different financing pathways and risk profiles and liquidity scenarios, as well.

Kanyi Maqubela is a Partner at Collaborative Fund, an early stage investment vehicle focused on mission-driven technology businesses. Collaborative has made over 50 investments at the early stage.

[collaborativefund.com/people/team/kanyi-maqubela](http://collaborativefund.com/people/team/kanyi-maqubela)

## J. NATHAN MATIAS

### Holding Networks Accountable For Misuse of Power

Digital networks have offered powerful opportunities to restructure collective action beyond the hierarchies of traditional firms. Yet these networks can reproduce inequalities, sharing and amplifying distributed forms of injustice. We have few tools to identify collective misuses of power in these emerging organizational forms and fewer interventions to hold networks accountable or address the harms they propagate. In this talk, Matias will share case studies and design interventions in citizen journalism, crowd funding, peer production, and online communities, to call for further attention on identifying misuses of power in collective action networks and addressing those misuses.

J. Nathan Matias, a PhD candidate at the MIT Center for Civic Media, researches the support and governance work of collective action online. As a designer, activist, and social scientist, Nathan uses quantitative and qualitative methods to answer questions that inform design interventions for social change. As a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Nathan is studying responses to online harassment, gender discrimination in collective action online, and the Reddit moderator blackout of 2015.

[natematias.com](http://natematias.com)

## MICKY METTS

### Cooperative Development - Thinking Outside the Boss!

Worker-owned cooperatives are businesses owned and controlled by the people who work in them. They are a time-tested way to create quality jobs, and are gaining momentum as a strategy to build and anchor wealth in communities. A cooperative is based on one worker = one vote. She will define how cooperative development is the foundation of a free society; Justice is a big part of the worker cooperative movement; Fairness and openness are values that must be in place for cooperative efforts to survive and flourish; And how bringing democracy and social equality to your projects through cooperation is a way to succeed. Meets will present some ideas and processes that work for Agaric and others, and discuss the options to build cooperative businesses in technology and beyond. She will also share details of how Agaric is structured, how they have been able to grow and how they enable others by building software and platforms for cooperation.

Drupal Hacker, Activist, and Industry Organizer - Metts is also member of Agaric, a worker owned cooperative of web developers who build platforms and applications using free software. Because we are part of the Free Software movement, we build on tools and frameworks created and tested by thousands of people. Our goal is to give you power over your web sites and online technology. Agaric also hosts events in Boston and we all speak at events around the world on building

cooperative business models based on social justice and the power of cooperative development using free software and hardware to build a free society.

[usworker.coop](http://usworker.coop)

[agaric.com/cooperatives](http://agaric.com/cooperatives)

[rebelnews.com/mickymetts/cooperative-action-what-does-it-look-like](http://rebelnews.com/mickymetts/cooperative-action-what-does-it-look-like)

## KRISTY MILLAND

### Platform Cooperativism

Platform cooperativism is a way to put the power back in the hands of the workers. In offline work, the ideal has always been to give ownership of the means of production to those who make that production possible, but it is a struggle that has yet to be realized widely. Since online platforms that facilitate labor are still in the early stages, it will be much easier for us to change the trajectory of future platforms by starting cooperatives today. With costs of operation low and incentive to use ethical platforms with happy workers high, the time is right to start building cooperatives and make the work environment one which enables the workers to take the power back and use it to ensure fair and ethical treatment as the norm.

"I want to talk about change. Uber drivers strike, and Turkers write to Jeff Bezos, but they face great hurdles in trying to get their voices heard. When you ask these workers what they're looking to change in their work environment, they may say they want to make more money, or that they want to feel more safe, or that they just want more

respect. Regardless of what a worker wants to improve, an easy way to ensure that a workplace is offering what the majority of workers are looking for is to let them run the business. This goes beyond employees holding stock options or having some sort of feedback mechanism, which reaches those at the top. The workers need to run the platform. Their experience as workers facilitates their ability as managers, and the benefits of such a system enhance the platform's utility to both workers and customers. Using my experience as a leader in the Turker community, and as a participant in the discussion around the creation of new platforms, I want to talk about change in a way which facilitates action."

Kristy Milland is a student at Ryerson University who has spent the last 10 years as a worker on Amazon Mechanical Turk. She is community manager of TurkerNation.com and also operates other tools and sites for Turkers. Recently, she led the Dear Jeff Bezos campaign on WeAreDynamo.org, which brought about a great deal of media interest. In an attempt to give Turkers a voice through her work, she was interviewed by many journalistic outlets across the globe. The paper on the project, "We Are Dynamo: Overcoming Stalling and Friction in Collective Action for Crowd Workers" by lead author Niloufar Salehi, won "Best of" at CHI 2015. Her interests also lie in how to make the work environment for digital laborers more ethical, and the creation of platforms run by workers is one of her passions.

[@TurkerNational](#)

## MICHELLE MILLER

### Coworker.org

Coworker.org is a digital platform that supports the growth of independent, worker-led networks inside companies. Since our founding in 2013, we've catalyzed the growth of these networks among Uber drivers, Wells Fargo bank tellers, Darden restaurant employees and Starbucks Baristas among many others primarily through digital organizing campaigns launched and led by workers on a variety of issues. We see these networks as emergent forms of decentralized collective structures that will operate horizontally in workplaces, shifting power and leading to more democratic practices. We're experimenting with a combination of technology and staff support interventions to make this possible, with the ultimate goal of creating a space for collaboration, data and information sharing, campaign creation and mutual aid among global networks of workers. These experiments start with a series of basic questions: How do we build peer visibility among workers in a digital space? How does that visibility lead to a collective sense of power and ongoing collaboration? How do we thoughtfully apply staff expertise to the networks while maintaining the distance that allows for truly imaginative, worker-led collective building? And how can we mitigate material risk to workers in this process of experimentation?

Michelle Miller is the co-founder of Coworker.org, a digital platform that matches campaigning tools with organizing, media and legal support to help people change their working conditions.

Since its founding in 2013, Coworker.org has catalyzed the growth of global, independent employee networks at major companies like Starbucks, Wells Fargo, Olive Garden and US Airways. Michelle's early work developing Coworker.org was supported by a 2012 Practitioner Fellowship at Georgetown University's Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor. She is a 2014 Echoing Green Global Fellow. Before co-founding Coworker.org, Michelle spent a decade at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) where she pioneered creative projects that advanced union campaigns. She is also a nationally recognized media artist and cultural organizer. Most recently, she directed the participatory media creation process for *Hollow*, a 2014 Peabody award-winning interactive documentary about her home state of West Virginia.

[coworker.org](#)

## PAUL D. MILLER (DJ SPOOKY)

Paul Miller, aka DJ Spooky, is a composer, multimedia artist, editor, and author. His DJ MIXER iPad app has been downloaded over 12 million times. In 2012-2013 he was the first artist-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC. He has produced and composed work for Yoko Ono, Thurston Moore, and scores of artists and award-winning films. Miller's work as a media artist has appeared in the Whitney Biennial; The Venice Biennial for Architecture, the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Germany; Kunsthalle, Vienna; The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and many other museums and galleries.

His books *Rhythm Science*, *Sound Unbound* and *The Imaginary App* were published by MIT Press.

[djspooky.com](http://djspooky.com)

## CINDY MILSTEIN

### Re-Commoning Our Lives

Behind every app and every platform in today's "sharing economy" is a hierarchical social relation. Indeed, "sharing" (and often "cooperation") only serves to further mask the logic of domination inherent to capitalism, which always results in brutal displacement and an inegalitarian world, and increasingly so. As Audre Lorde rightly asserted, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." So what might it look like to bring our own toolkit to the project of constructing a free society? What might these tools even look like, and how would we make ethical use of them so as to increasingly school ourselves in de-commodified sharing to meet our needs/desires and collective processes of self-determination and self-governance?

Cindy Milstein is author of *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* (AK Press, 2010), editor of *Taking Sides: Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism* (AK Press, 2015), and coauthor (with Erik Ruin) of *Paths toward Utopia: Graphic Explorations of Everyday Anarchism* (PM Press, 2012). Recently, she has been actively engaged in resisting evictions, including her own collective house/space, and anti-cop organizing in the Bay Area, and has written many "Dispatches from Gentrifying San Francisco" on her blog.

[cbmilstein.wordpress.com](http://cbmilstein.wordpress.com)

## LAUREN MOBERTZ

Lauren Mobertz is a New York-based freelance writer and editor who specializes in labor and balanced workplaces. When she is not writing about the career moves of gutsy millennials, Lauren is usually running in strange places or trying to dance Brazilian zouk.

Lauren is co-producing Platform Cooperativism.

[GenerationLimbo.com](http://GenerationLimbo.com)

## DAN MONGAN

### My User Agreement

Consumers don't have to settle for aggressively one-sided user agreements proffered on a take it or leave it basis. Finally there's something ordinary people can do to protect their rights. In just a few simple steps, at [myuseragreement.com](http://myuseragreement.com), consumers can adopt terms and conditions of their own. Using established legal principle, My User Agreement provides an innovative solution to a vexing problem. And when enough people get behind this approach, it will be impossible for companies to ignore. The more people who sign up, the stronger our protections will be. My User Agreement represents a new model for collective action with broad applications. By harnessing the power of the Internet, ordinary people can change the terms of commerce worldwide. The approach we are pioneering has important implications for the labor and environmental movements as well as many other areas.

Dan Mongan is a Partner in the Corporate Practice Group of Leech

Tishman Fuscaldo & Lampl based in New York. He advises technology companies and investors relating to financing and corporate transactions. His experience covers a range of industries including finance, medical technology, consumer products, homeland security and alternative energy. Together with Anna Bernasek he co-founded The Integrity Partnership to assist companies investing in their most valuable asset, their integrity, and My User Agreement LLC to assist consumers worldwide in establishing personal terms of service to protect their data from misuse. He is the co-author of *All You Can Pay*. Dan holds a degree in chemical Engineering from the University of Delaware and law from the University of Pennsylvania.

[myuseragreement.com](http://myuseragreement.com)

## ANDRÉS MONROY-HERNÁNDEZ

### The Design and Implementation of a Generalizable Worker-Centric Peer Economy Platform

We at FUSE Labs have been doing and funding academic research on the "Sharing Economy." For the past few months, we have been working with labor organizations on the design and implementation of a generalizable worker-centric peer economy platform. We seek to empower labor organizations to determine the parameters and algorithms of these labor platforms. Our goal is to do for on-demand service marketplaces what Wordpress did for blogging.

Andrés Monroy-Hernández is a researcher at Microsoft Research, and

an affiliate faculty at the University of Washington. His work focuses on the design and study of social computing systems. Andrés was named one of the TR35 Innovators by the MIT Technology Review in Spanish, and one of CNET's influential Latinos in Tech. His research has received best paper awards at several computing conferences, recognized at Ars Electronica, and featured in The New York Times, The Guardian, NPR, and Wired. Andrés holds a Ph.D. from the MIT Media Lab, where he created the Scratch Online Community.

## KARLA MORALES

Karla Morales has been a member-owner of Beyond Care Childcare Cooperative since 2013. She always wanted to work with kids—back in Mexico she studied to become a special education teacher. When she moved here 17 years ago, she first worked in housekeeping. She loves being part of Beyond Care because she learns so much through courses and trainings. These learning help her both in her work and her personal life.

[beyondcare.coop](http://beyondcare.coop)

## MAYO FUSTER MORELL

### Platform Capitalism versus Platform Cooperativism

Collaboration and sharing are not independent practices that grow independent of the conditions out of which they emerge. How far does the ownership regime (platform capitalism versus platform cooperativism) shape the collaborative production and sharing practices? In

her presentation, Fuster Morell will address these questions by analyzing the diverse ownership and governance regimes present in the concrete case of commons – based peer production, and investigate if and how ownership and governance shapes the collaborative process in terms of the type of collaboration engaged, sustainability strategy, and value creation. The presentation will be based on an analysis of a sample of 300 cases and the case comparison of 4 in-depth case studies as well as Fuster Morell's experience in the field. This research is part of the European project "P2Pvalue.eu: Techno-social platform for sustainable models and value generation in commons-based peer production in the Future Internet." If ownership does not only constitute diverse labor and political modalities, but also determine what can be done and shared, then the selection (by peers and policy makers) between promoting platform capitalism versus platform cooperativism become more complex and has further implications.

Mayo Fuster Morell is a postdoctoral fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society (Harvard University) and the Institute of Government and Public Policies (Autonomous University of Barcelona), and promoter of Building Digital Commons. She conducts research on issues such as common-base peer production, online communities governance, techno-political tools, social movements, and on social justice and digital rights activism.

## DAVID MORGAN

David Morgan has long been involved with social movements—from public space activism to anti-poverty work—that make use of the kind of everyday democracy that is at the core of his work as a worker-owner at **The Toolbox for Education and Social Action (TESA)**. His background is in cultural organizing, as co-founder of the Groundswell Collective, a group of artists/activists who produced and researched critical cultural works, and as a committee member the HONK! Festival of activist street bands for more than five years. After graduating from Hampshire College, he focused on nonprofit communications work with such groups as the Boston-based housing rights organization City Life/Vida Urbana before becoming involved with the worker cooperative movement. David also sits on the board of the Data Commons Cooperative and the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives.

## ANNETTE MÜHLBERG

### Guidelines For Good Digital Labor

"Dignity, self-determination, solidarity and good work in the digital society!" was the title of our recent ver.di conference in June 2015. As trade unionists we want to shape new forms of working and influence the political framework, ensuring a decent life for everyone – be it a regular employee with a stable working contract or a freelancer. We fight on to establish a collective agreement for Amazon as well as to implement trade union achievements like co-determination, freedom of association, minimum wages, employee

data protection, occupational health and safety and social security to the new field of online platform work. We will use the German model of social partnership to shape this technology-driven social change and to abandon precarious work and poverty among the elderly. We will not leave the figuration of our living and working conditions to multinational companies. Therefore, we cooperate with the German Federal Ministry of Labor to develop new forms of social insurances for freelancers such as giving platform workers a new right to further training for all employees. Ver.di created guidelines for good digital work that became the official resolution of the Confederation of German Trade Unions. In her presentation, Mühlberg will address these guidelines and present new ways of innovative trade union work.

Annette Mühlberg works for the United Services Union (ver.di) in Berlin. With more than 2 million members - both regular employees and freelancers - ver.di is one of the largest independent trade unions in the world. She is head of the ver.di working-group on digitalization and is responsible for digital labor, net-politics and e-government. She was member of the Enquête "Internet and Digital Society" of the German Bundestag, a commission of experts and parliamentarians advising the German Federal Parliament. For 15 years she has been focusing on the challenges of digitalization in respect to democracy, civil rights and a co-determined world of work. She developed model company agreements in the field of e-government to strengthen public interest and good working conditions.

## NABIL ECHCHAIBI

Nabil Echchaibi is Associate Professor and founding chair of the Department of Media Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. His research is situated at the crossroad of important contemporary issues such as identity, religion, and the role of media in shaping and reflecting modern religious subjectivities among Muslims in the Middle East and in diaspora. His work on diasporic media and the leveling of religious authority through the proliferation of Islamic media has appeared in various journal publications and book volumes. He is the author of *Voicing Diasporas: Ethnic Radio in Paris and Berlin Between Culture and Renewal* (Lexington Books 2011) and co-editor of *International Blogging : Identity, Politics and Networked Publics* (Peter Lang 2009).

## JANELLE ORSI

### Principles For A True Sharing Economy

Principles of equity must become embedded into the legal DNA of tech platforms. As tech platforms rapidly become a new means of production for nearly every industry—from domestic work to taxis and far beyond—we have a window of opportunity to decisively reject "business-as-usual" in the tech industry and, instead, build platforms designed to create a just, equitable, and democratic society. At this conference, we can start to gather consensus around some basic principles for the legal, governance, and financial design of tech platforms built more genuinely on sharing.

Janelle Orsi is a lawyer, advocate, writer, and cartoonist focused on cooperatives, the sharing economy, urban agriculture, shared housing, local currencies, and community-supported enterprises. She is Co-founder and Executive Director of the Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELCA), which facilitates the growth of more sustainable and localized economies through education, research, and advocacy. Janelle has also worked in private law practice at the Law Office of Janelle Orsi, focusing on sharing economy law since 2008. Janelle is the author of *Practicing Law in the Sharing Economy: Helping People Build Cooperatives, Social Enterprise, and Local Sustainable Economies* (ABA Books 2012), and co-author of *The Sharing Solution: How to Save Money, Simplify Your Life & Build Community* (Nolo Press 2009), a practical and legal guide to cooperating and sharing resources of all kinds.

[theselc.org](http://theselc.org)

## JULIA OTT

Julia Ott uses history to investigate Americans' rather unique faith in laissez-faire capitalism, a faith now tested by ongoing financial turmoil and economic malaise. Ott's book *When Wall Street Met Main Street* tells the story of how financial markets and institutions—commonly perceived as marginal and elitist at the beginning of the twentieth century—first came to be seen as the bedrock of American capitalism. It traces how investment in bonds and stock - once considered disreputable and dangerous — first became a mass practice in the first three decades of the twentieth century. *When Wall Street*

*Met Main Street* won the 2013 Vincent J. DeSantis Prize for the Best Book in the History of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Ott asks why so much trust was placed in finance as the engine of economic growth and stability in the last thirty-odd years. She seeks to understand why recent attempts to repair the frayed social safety net have provoked such rabid anti-government, pro-business reactions from large segments of the public. These sentiments stand in marked contrast with the great reform movements of American history, which sought to reign in rampaging capitalism. Further, they repudiate the political-economic regime of the post-World War II period, a modern liberalism grounded in mass purchasing power, the self-financing corporation, the welfare state, and Keynesian economic policy. Julia Ott co-edits the book series *Columbia Studies in the History of U.S. Capitalism* for Columbia University Press.

[newschool.edu/nssrfaculty/](http://newschool.edu/nssrfaculty/)

## RACHEL O'DWYER

### Blockchain for Platform Cooperativism

How might distributed infrastructures such as the blockchain support platform cooperativism? Recently we have been hearing a lot about the blockchain. Not only because it is the distributed ledger that underpins bitcoin transactions, but also because individuals and collectives are starting to consider the applications of the blockchain for other forms of non-financial cooperation and decision-making. Proposed applications include p2p clouds and data storage, Wi-Fi mesh networking, decentralized

voting and reputation systems, as well as a number of alternative sharing applications. Here the blockchain emerges as a promising tool to support platform cooperativism. However, the recent interest in the blockchain is also an opportunity to think critically about tools and technologies for engineering socio-economic collectivism. To what extent can distributed technologies model or instantiate desirable forms of sharing and peer production? And when we design for cooperation, what kinds of sociality and subjectivity are we engineering into our systems? How can we cultivate forms of social production and human trust alongside distributed platforms?

Rachel O'Dwyer is a lecturer and researcher in the School of Computer Science in Trinity College Dublin. She is the leader of the Dublin Art and Technology Association ([www.data.ie](http://www.data.ie)) and curator of Openhere ([www.openhere.data.ie](http://www.openhere.data.ie)), a festival and conference on the digital commons. Rachel is a core member of the P2P Foundation where she coordinates the P2P academic research network and 100 women in peer-to-peer networking. She publishes, speaks, and organizes events on topics such as the political economy of communications, disruptive technologies and the digital commons. She is a regular contributor to Neural magazine.

## FRANK PASQUALE

### Risk Mitigation Strategies for Platform Cooperatives

Recently some for-profit gig economy firms failed, ostensibly due to lawsuits over worker classification. Other for-

profit firms thrive by ignoring or evading the law. Some legal issues facing platform coops are relatively straightforward: few doubt the moral imperative of abiding by anti-discrimination laws, however aggressively firms like Uber disclaim their applicability to platforms. Screening and monitoring employees will be a more difficult issue. We need to move from criticizing the digital star chamber of 5-star rating systems and address the types of concerns they crudely reflect: merit and opportunity within a workplace. The question of screening is important, too: how are bad actors kept out of the coop? Finally, the question of insurance is key. Should a platform coop for drivers simply take Uber's approach and shift the responsibility to drivers to decide how well they want to insure? Or is this a matter best handled collectively? These practical concerns should be part of risk mitigation strategies of emerging coops.

Frank Pasquale is a professor of law at the University of Maryland. His research addresses the challenges posed to information law by rapidly changing technology, particularly in the health care, Internet, and finance industries. He is a member of the Council for Big Data, Ethics, and Society, and an Affiliate Fellow of Yale Law School's Information Society Project. He frequently presents on the ethical, legal, and social implications of information technology for attorneys, physicians, and other health professionals. His book *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms that Control Money and Information* (Harvard University Press, 2015) develops a social theory of reputation, search, and finance. Pasquale serves

on the Advisory Boards of the Data Competition Institute, Data Justice, Patient Privacy Rights and the Electronic Privacy Information Center. He is on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Legal Education* and the *Oxford Handbooks Online* in Law.

@FrankPasquale

## SOFIA RANCHORDÁS

### Sharing in the City

The “gig” or the “sharing economy” has been the subject of recent praise and criticism. While the first regulatory debates at federal level still seem to be in their infancy, a number of cities in the United States (for example, San Francisco) and abroad appear to be willing to intervene more actively in the regulation of this new form of collaboration. Although sharing economy platforms trigger common problems (e.g., privacy concerns, occupational licensing, consumer protection), cities have mixed sentiments regarding the different platforms. For example, while some cities are more flexible regarding ride sharing (e.g., Uber), they seem to be less eager to accept home sharing (e.g., Airbnb). In this presentation, Ranchordás will distinguish between different sharing and collaborative practices. In addition, she will inquire as to what role cities should play in the regulation of sharing economy platforms and examine how the development of sharing economy is shaping the role of cities as regulators.

Sofia Ranchordás, PhD, is a Resident Fellow at the Information Society Project at Yale Law School. She is also Assistant

Professor of Constitutional and Administrative Law at Tilburg Law School, in the Netherlands. In her scholarship she pleads for more regulatory flexibility and a broader use of temporary and evidence-based instruments (for example, experimental legislation) to address disconnects between law and innovation. She has published extensively on innovation and regulation, including a book on sunset clauses and experimental legislation, and the article “Innovation Experimentalism in the Age of Sharing Economy” (forthcoming in the *Lewis & Clark Law Review*, 2015) and “Does Sharing Mean Caring? The Regulation of Innovation in Sharing Economy” in the *Minnesota Journal of Law, Science and Technology* (2015), where she analyzes different collaborative practices and offers a framework for the regulation of sharing economy characterized by regulatory flexibility.

## BRISHEN ROGERS

### Organizing for Platform Cooperativism

Apps and algorithms that exploit network effects have enabled the rise of the so-called “sharing economy.” But they can also enable the rise of new social movements to check corporate power and undergird robust platform cooperativism. The reason is that such apps and algorithms could make organizing far, far easier. Traditional organizing is time-consuming and expensive, and involves five phases. Organizers must contact workers, consumers, or citizens (the “targeting” phase); figure out their desires (the “assessing” phase); show them that others share those desires (the “assuring” phase); move them into

action (the “motivating” phase); and consolidate those individuals’ collective power into a lasting organization (the “institutionalizing” phase). Citizens linked together by the right platform running the right set of algorithms could pass through these phases at dramatically lower cost. Such a platform might gather data on consumer purchases and web browsing, not to enable sales, but to determine which consumers have strong preferences for ethical consumption, to put them in contact with one another, and to help them organize boycotts. Such a platform might link together all restaurant workers, or all health care workers, or all security guards within a particular city—or nationally, or globally—both providing them job-related information and enabling workers to organize walkouts or consumer boycotts. Think of this as Organizing 3.0—a platform that enables fast and effective concerted action through smart use of network effects, that moves online networks into the streets, and that is radically democratic, designed to enable thousands of new experimental forms of user-driven mobilization. Developing such an organizing platform should not be that difficult if skilled organizers, programmers and analysts work together. Just as labor, consumer, and agrarian movements have long supported classic cooperative production models, such organizations could help provide the social basis for platform cooperativism.

Brishen Rogers is Associate Professor of Law at Temple University Beasley School of Law, where he teaches torts, employment discrimination, and global labor law. His current research focuses

on the influence of new technologies on work, social mobilization, and democracy. His recent essay “The Social Costs of Uber” considered the distributive issues raised by the explosive growth of the “car-sharing” service Uber. Another forthcoming article entitled “Employment as a Legal Concept” develops the legal case for treating Uber and Lyft drivers as employees. Prior to law school, Professor Rogers spent five years as an organizer, including a stint with SEIU’s “Justice for Janitors” campaign. He has founded and edited two online journals, one at the University of Virginia and another at Harvard Law School. He has also taught international labor law as part of Harvard Law School’s Institute for Global Law & Policy, and informally advises various workers’ rights organizations on various matters.

## CARMEN ROJAS

Carmen Rojas is the CEO of The Workers Lab, an innovation lab that invests in entrepreneurs, community organizers, and technologists to create replicable and revenue generating solutions that improve conditions for low-wage workers. It invests capital, offers an accelerator program focused on business and leadership development, and connects ventures to a broad network of supporters to support their continued development and success. Prior to assuming this position, she was the Acting Director of Collective Impact at Living Cities, Director of Strategic Programs at the Mitchell Kapor Foundation, and Coordinator of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency’s Taskforce

on African American Out-Migration. Carmen holds a Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning from the University of California, Berkeley, and was a Fulbright Scholar in 2007. She taught in the Department of City & Regional Planning at the University of California at Berkeley from 2009 to 2011. Her teaching focused on the history of cities in the US, a practicum on local economic development, planning pedagogy, and race in the practice of city planning.

[theworkerslab.com](http://theworkerslab.com)

## DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

### Platform Cooperatives: How Digital Media Finally Enables Distributed Enterprise

A form of networked distributivism may just be our last best hope for peace in the digital economy, today. The conscious application of more distributist principles into the digital economic program could yield an entirely more prosperous and sustainable operating system. Instead of simply amplifying the most dehumanizing and extractive qualities of industrialism, it pushes ahead to something different - while also retrieving the truly free market principles long-obsolete by corporatism.

Douglas Rushkoff is the author of *Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now* as well as a dozen other best-selling books on media, technology, and culture, including *Program or Be Programmed*, *Media Virus*, *Life Inc.* and the novel *Ecstasy Club*. He is Professor of Media Theory and Digital Economics at CUNY/Queens. He wrote the

graphic novels *Testament* and *A.D.D.*, and made the television documentaries *Generation Like*, *Merchants of Cool*, *The Persuaders*, and *Digital Nation*. He lives in New York, and lectures about media, society, and economics around the world. His new book on digital economics will be released by Penguin in March.

[rushkoff.com](http://rushkoff.com)

## SASKIA SASSEN

### A “Neighborhood/Low-Wage Workplace” Digital Platform

Digitization can help transform the neighborhood into a social back-up system. The home and the neighborhood have long been support spaces for the working class. Today, the workspace and the neighborhood are underperforming when it comes to support, mostly due to changes in the condition of low-wage workers. My question is: Can digitization help construct the neighborhood and workplace as a platform when it comes to key daily life issues -from support to organizing? The high-end worker is already a full and effective user of these technologies, and in the US, most digital applications have been geared to the middle classes and high-end workers and households (and to scientists). They have access to enough connective digital tissue to have, in effect, a platform that binds key elements of their daily routines. It is inconceivable today that the high-end worker can or does simply leave it all behind when closing the door of her/his office for the day — on those few days every week when s/he might actually work in the office. We might say the correlation for the low-wage

worker is that it is a fiction that s/he can simply leave it all behind when s/he closes the door of her/his home and goes to work. Very little has been developed to meet the needs for low-income workers, their families, and their neighborhoods. My proposal is that what would most enable low-wage workers is the extension of digitization to the larger space within which these workers operate: not only the workplace narrowly understood, but also, and very importantly, their neighborhood. While this may sound a bit extreme, it is already a fact among high-end workers: digitization has become a way of restructuring not only the workspace but also the living space of these workers. For low-wage workers, the correlate is that the neighborhood is active -that it begins to function as a social-back up system. I see this also as a first step in the mobilizing of the neighborhood towards larger goals, including connecting transversally with other low-income neighborhoods.

Saskia Sassen is the author of several books, among which *The Global City* and *Guests and Aliens*. Her new book is *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Harvard University Press 2014). Her books are translated in over 20 languages. She has received diverse awards, multiple doctor honoris causa, and been chosen as one of the Top 100 Global Thinkers in multiple lists. Most recently, she was awarded the 2013 Principe de Asturias Prize for the Social Sciences, and was elected to the Netherlands Royal Academy of the Sciences.

[saskiasassen.com](http://saskiasassen.com)

## NATHAN SCHNEIDER

Nathan Schneider is a reporter and a visiting assistant professor of media studies at University of Colorado Boulder. He is the author of two books, *God in Proof: The Story of a Search from the Ancients to the Internet* and *Thank You, Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse*. His articles, many of which deal with cooperative economics, have appeared in Harper's Magazine, The Nation, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Vice, Al Jazeera America, and other outlets. He has consulted on several Social Science Research Council digital projects, and is an editor for two online publications, *Killing the Buddha* and *Waging Nonviolence*.

[therowboat.com](http://therowboat.com)

## TREBOR SCHOLZ

### Unpacking Platform Cooperativism

The distrust of the dominant extractive economic model is growing, companies in the on-demand economy have been criticized for the “nullification of Federal Law,” the elimination of democratic values like accountability, dignity, and rights for workers. Every Uber has an under; old command has been replaced with new command. However, trying to reverse the spread of contingent work seems futile; it is hard to imagine a return to the days when most people worked a 40-hour week.

Silicon Valley loves a good disruption, so let's give them one. At the example of five different types of platforms, Scholz will offer ten principles for platform cooperativism and then aim to join the various pieces that make up this puzzle,

ranging from ownership, financing, free software, design, and governance, to scale. It is about structural change, cooperative and municipal ownership models, legal protections, inventive unions, a redefinition of innovation, and collective decision-making. Platform cooperativism is a rectangle of hope. At this event, let's start to build a politically powerful movement that expresses our ideas.

Trebor Scholz is a German-American writer, educator, activist, and chair of the conference series The Politics of Digital Culture at the New School. Scholz was born in East-Berlin, raised in a Russian-language school and has since lived in London, Dresden, Weimar, Portland, Buffalo, Tucson, Zurich, and San Francisco. Today, Scholz is Associate Professor for Culture & Media at The New School in New York City. He published *The Internet as Playground and Factory*, based on the 2009 conference of the same name. He is an activist in favor of worker rights in the sharing economy and a proponent of platform cooperativism as well as universal basic income. His teaching has focused on themes like global media activism and extra-institutional, self-organized learning. Scholz has convened nine major conferences including the series of three [digital labor conferences](#) at The New School. He has presented keynotes and lectures at conferences worldwide, including the Obama White House. He held a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and his articles and ideas have appeared in *The Nation*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *The Washington Post*. His book *Uber-Worked and Under-*

*paid. How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy* is forthcoming with Polity. *Unpacking Platform Cooperativism* will be published by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (in German and English).

[@trebors](#)

[platformcoop.net](#)

[digitallabor.org/2009](#)

[digitallabor.org](#)

## JULIET SCHOR

### How To Build And Sustain Cooperative Platforms

Controversy about for-profit platforms in the “sharing economy” has continued to grow, as labor practices, earnings, safety and a number of other issues have come in for scrutiny. In this talk, Schor will present findings from a research project on sharing initiatives that she has been conducting since 2011, which includes both non-profits (makerspaces, food swaps, time bank, open education) and for-profits. She will focus on data from approximately 50 providers on three platforms—Airbnb, TaskRabbit and Relay Rides—discussing their experiences, earnings, and attitudes. Her data includes some re-interviews as well as a longitudinal perspective. We find great variation in earnings, and less with respect to providers’ satisfaction, which is generally high. She will also address issues of inequality with respect to platform earnings and access. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of what the data (from both the for and non-profit cases) can teach us about how to build and sustain cooperative platforms.

Juliet Schor is Professor of Sociology at Boston College. She is a member of the MacArthur Foundation Connected Learning Research Network for which she is leading a six-year project on the “connected economy,” studying both non and for-profits, such as makerspaces, timebanks, food swaps, as well as large platforms such as Airbnb and Task Rabbit. Schor’s PhD is in economics, which she taught at Harvard University from 1984-1995. She is the author of the national best-sellers *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, *The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don’t Need*, and *True Wealth: How and Why Millions of Americans are Creating a Time-Rich, Ecologically Light, Small-Scale, High-Satisfaction Economy*. Schor is the recipient of the Leontief Prize, the Herman Daly Prize, Guggenheim and Radcliffe fellowships, and the ASA Public Understanding of Sociology Award. She appears frequently in national and international media.

## CHRISTOPH SPEHR

### Part Of The Solution: New Labor Rights, Entrepreneurial Rights And Social Transformation For The Age Of Algo-Capitalism

Whoever owns a little bit of social conscience is facing again the old question if, doing what we do, we are part of the problem or part of the solution. The transformation of production, labor and society by digitalization and algorithmization has provided stunning potentials for collaboration, creativity and for the liberation from dependencies and command. It has also provided stunning examples of intensified exploitation,

new precarity, unfair labor, extreme inequality, total alienation, and outright boredom. Although it is important to experiment with alternative forms of social corporations and non-profit cooperation, you also have to fight collectively for a shifted balance of power. There is a strong need for a new generation of labor rights, but also of new entrepreneurial rights and a new role for public capital and collective ownership. And we should add the question: What do bosses do, and do we need bosses to do it?

Christoph Spehr was probably invited because he wrote a theory of free cooperation, which was embraced with interest by free software idealists, collaborative artists, communes, network activists and political critics, but not so much by academia, although it did win the first Rosa-Luxemburg-Prize in 2001. It was published as “Free Cooperation” in Lovink/Scholz (eds.), *The Art of Free Cooperation* in 2007. The theory of free cooperation aims to sort out what distinguishes fair and equal collaboration from forced cooperation, i.e., exploitation, which is useful because you don’t necessarily see it at first glance. For the Free Cooperation conference at SUNY Buffalo, 2004, Spehr also created a video work, *On Rules and Monsters: An Introduction to Free Cooperation* (with Jörg Windszus and Tony Conrad). Christoph Spehr worked for many NGOs, partly in self-owned, cooperative structures. Today, he is the head of the Left Party in Bremen and earns his living as a scientific assistant for its local parliamentary group.

## PALAK SHAH

### What Would An Equitable On-Demand Economy Platform Look Like?

What are the specs for platforms that treat workers with dignity and respect? Palak Shah, of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, will share the lessons and strategies from the original 'gig workers' —the millions of women who work in the shadows as cleaners, caregivers, and nannies. Palak will describe how the new on-demand economy is disrupting the informal care markets and what one of our most powerful social movements is doing about it. She will offer a set of guiding principles on how we can build sustainable platforms that work for all us.

Palak Shah is the Social Innovations Director at the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the Founding Director of Fair Care Labs. In these roles, Shah leads the domestic workers' experimental and market-based strategy to improve the lives of domestic workers. Her main focus is on raising market norms and standards, partnering with the private sector, and building scalable and sustainable business ventures. National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) is one the country's most dynamic and successful social change organizations. NDWA is the nation's leading organization dedicated to advancing the rights, protections, and opportunities for domestic workers across the United States. It has been at the forefront of efforts to revitalize and reshape the labor, women's, and broader progressive movements for the 21st century. Fair Care Labs is the innovation arm

of the domestic worker movement. Our mission is to shape the future of the care industry and emerging care markets. Our main focus is on raising market norms and standards, partnering with the private sector, and building scalable and sustainable business ventures. We pursue cross-disciplinary social innovations using market-based, entrepreneurial and collaborative strategies that ultimately aim to improve the quality of care and the quality of domestic work jobs in the home.

[domesticworkers.org](http://domesticworkers.org)

## RACHEL SHERMAN

Rachel Sherman is interested in social inequalities, especially those of class, gender, and race, and in how and why people both accept and challenge unequal social relations. She uses qualitative methods to investigate identities and interactions in the context of extreme inequality in the U.S., especially in relations of production and consumption in the service economy. Her first book, *Class Acts* (University of California Press, 2007), drew on a year of ethnography in two urban luxury hotels to analyze how workers and guests and negotiated the obvious class disparities between them. She is currently working on a second book, entitled *Uneasy Street* (Princeton University Press, forthcoming), which uses in-depth interviews to look at how wealthy and affluent new York parents think and feel about their lifestyles and their privilege. This work is also linked to research she has conducted on the "outsourcing" of services from the home through the use of

personal concierges. Finally, she is interested in labor movements as another form of contention over entitlements.

## SIX SILBERMAN

Six Silberman is a co-maintainer of Turkopticon, an employer reputation system used by workers on Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform. He has a Ph.D. in Information and Computer Sciences from the University of California, Irvine. He works for IG Metall, a German labor union.

## KATI SIPP

### Reputation, Reputation, Reputation

As more and more of us find work or income online through on-demand platforms like AirBnB, Uber, and Taskrabbit, our online reputations are becoming critical to our livelihoods. What does it mean for individual workers, to have their reputations "owned" by corporations who can cancel an account at the blink of an eye? What responsibility do cooperative platforms have to make their worker-owners' individual reputations portable and inclusive of all the economic activity that they generate? What kind of organizing will it take for workers be able to regain control over their own reputations?

Kati Sipp is the state director of Pennsylvania Working Families. She is also the editor of the blog Hack the Union, which focuses on the intersections of work, organizing and technology. Prior to her work there, she spent nine years working for SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, serving as the statewide Political Director and spending five years as an

Executive Vice President of the local. Kati began working with SEIU in California in 1997, where she was an internal organizer, working with classified school employees. She left California in 1999 to move back to the East Coast, and began work for the Philadelphia Unemployment Project, where she organized mothers who were affected by changes in the state's welfare policy. After leaving PUP, she spent time as the director of the Jobs with Justice affiliate in Philadelphia, before going back to SEIU. Kati is the proud mother of Alina and Isaac. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University.

[@hacktheunion](http://@hacktheunion)

## TOM SLEE

### Platform Co-Operatives and The Problem Of Trust

Maintaining trust among members is a central challenge for any community or co-operative. For digital platforms, ratings-based reputation systems have become the standard tool of choice, but it's becoming increasingly clear that reputation systems fail at their basic task of discriminating between good and bad experiences. Also, there are signs that accurate, unbiased reputation systems can easily become tools of surveillance and arbitrary discipline. Platform co-operatives adopting reputation systems should do so cautiously and should be aware of their problems. This talk is a warning to platform co-operatives of the hazards of reputation systems. While there's no technological quick fix for trust, Slee will also try to sketch some paths towards a solution.

Tom Slee writes about the intersections of technology, politics, and economics. He has a PhD in theoretical chemistry, a long career in the software industry, and his book "No One Makes You Shop At Wal-Mart" is a left-wing game-theoretical investigation of individual choice that has been used in university economics, philosophy and sociology courses.

[tomslee.net](http://tomslee.net)

## REBECCA SMITH

### Rights on Demand

The explosive growth of the on-demand economy makes it urgent that issues raised around workers' rights be addressed. Primary among these is the prevailing business model in on-demand companies that treats workers as "independent contractors" or "self-employed," pushing onto their shoulders many of the risks, (but very few of the benefits) of truly operating an independent business. The independent contractor model puts hard-won core labor rights at risk. While courts will ultimately decide the issue of employee status, bold action is necessary to ensure that workers in the on demand economy can make a fair wage, enjoy job security, have an adequate safety net and a secure retirement. Co-ops are an important option for delivering workers' rights: one such model comes from a recent Montgomery County, MD taxi ordinance. The co-op model has the advantage that the capital costs of forming a co-op are less significant than in other businesses, since many of the capital costs of forming a business have already been borne by workers termed

independent contractors. Additionally, taking the company's 20 - 25% cut of worker pay out of the equation provides room to significantly raise workers' pay.

Rebecca Smith graduated in 1982 from the University of Washington School of Law and has worked, since that time, representing low-wage and immigrant workers and workers in the subcontracted economy on employment issues. She is the Deputy Director of the National Employment Law Project (NELP). She has written, testified, litigated and lectured extensively on immigrant workers' employment rights, labor rights as human rights, and wage and hour and unemployment insurance law. She has also worked with allies to develop local, state and federal policies to protect and expand low-wage workers' rights and enforcement of those rights.

[help.org](http://help.org)

## SAKET SONI

Saket Soni is Executive Director of the National Guestworkers Alliance and the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice. He has worked as an organizer in Chicago at the Coalition of African, Asian, European, and Latino Immigrants of Illinois, a city-wide immigrant rights coalition, and at the Organization of the North East. He co-authored "And Injustice For All: Workers' Lives In the Reconstruction," the most comprehensive report on race in the Reconstruction of the post-Katrina Gulf Coast, and "Never Again: Lessons of the Gustav Evacuation," an account of the treatment of African Americans in the sheltering process.

[guestworkeralliance.org](http://guestworkeralliance.org)

## DANNY SPITZBERG

### Co-ops, Crowdfunding, and The Crowd

Co-op enthusiasts like to say that "cooperatives are the original crowdfunding," yet co-ops and "the crowd" are often at odds. Co-ops organize members, whereas crowdfunding campaigns mobilize consumers or investors. How might crowdfunding help co-ops build collective power? This talk reviews experience and data from past crowdfunding campaigns and trainings with co-ops. It then presents new platforms that help us reimagine crowdfunding as "crowdresourcing," shifting the focus from raising money to engaging members.

Danny Spitzberg is an ethnographer and campaign strategist based in Oakland, California. He is principal at Peak Agency, a collective that works with cultural and economic justice projects to grow their membership, most recently helping re-launch Loconomics, a freelancer-owned platform for local services. He organized with Omni Commons, a collective of collectives, and co-directed CoFED, a national training program and network of student-led food co-ops.

[@daspitzberg](http://daspitzberg)

[peakagency.co](http://peakagency.co)

## RICHARD STALLMAN

### Cooperativism's Digital Platforms Must Respect Endangered Digital Freedoms

Digital activity today typically imposes two injustices: massive surveillance, and running software that is controlled by

someone other than its users. In moving cooperativism to the digital world, we must take care to avoid those injustices. Digital cooperatives must avoid amassing dossiers about their participants or their customers, since those would help the state snoop on everyone. They also must not involve use of non-libre programs, because those subordinate their users to someone else's power.

Dr. Richard Stallman launched the free software movement in 1983 and started the development of the GNU operating system in 1984. GNU is free software: everyone has the freedom to copy it and redistribute it, with or without changes. The GNU/Linux system, basically the GNU operating system with Linux added, is used on tens of millions of computers today. Stallman has received the ACM Grace Hopper Award, a MacArthur Foundation fellowship, the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Pioneer Award, and the the Takeda Award for Social/Economic Betterment, as well as several doctorates honoris causa, and has been inducted into the Internet Hall of Fame.

[gnu.org](http://gnu.org)

## VALERIO DE STEFANO

### Implications of Antitrust Law For Platform Cooperativism

Valerio will discuss the potential implications of antitrust law for platform cooperativism. Although his analysis is not country specific, he focuses on the competition laws in the EU. If platform cooperatives become successful, they will raise wages for on-demand economy workers. The concern would be that they could then

be subject to attack under antitrust or competition laws. He will argue that in fact, platform coops should not be subject to antitrust laws, and that further we should reconsider antitrust immunities in order to encompass workers in the on-demand economy.

Valerio De Stefano, born in 1982, holds a Ph.D. in Law of Business and Commerce from Bocconi University, in Milan. His current research activity focuses in particular on casual forms of work, including on-call and zero-hour contracts, marginal part-time, crowd work and “work on-demand.” In June 2014, he joined the International Labour Office as a Technical Officer in the Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch (INWORK) of the WORKQUALITY Department, where he mainly carries out research about the regulation of non-standard forms of work across the world, such as temporary work, temporary agency work and other contractual arrangements involving multiple parties, disguised employment relationships, dependent self-employment and part-time work.

## ARUN SUNDARARAJAN

### An Economic Perspective on Cooperatives, Blockchain-Based Collectives and Other Distributed Collaborative Organizations

If the “stock” of emerging sharing economy, on-demand, and peer-to-peer platforms and collectives are owned in part by their providers, a future of work populated by empowered micro-entrepreneurs rather than disenfranchised workers is more likely, and such a

future may feature progressively lower inequality over time, since the “flows” associated with labor grow less rapidly than the returns from owning capital. Sundararajan will discuss why provider-owned organizational structures are relatively uncommon in the United States, highlighting specific characteristics—diversity in provider contribution level and quality, rate of technological progress, and level of competition—that determine the relative economic efficiency of shareholder corporations and other ownership structures. He will also discuss some challenges associated with the “economic mechanisms” underlying emerging distributed collaborative organizations and blockchain collectives that use coin-based incentives, and how hybrid ownership structures may partially mitigate these challenges.

Arun Sundararajan is a Professor and NEC Faculty Fellow at New York University’s Leonard N. Stern School of Business. He also heads the Social Cities Initiative at NYU’s Center for Urban Science+Progress, and is an affiliated faculty member at NYU’s Center for Data Science. Professor Sundararajan’s research program studies how digital technologies transform business and society. Some of his current and recent research focuses on the governance of digital spaces, collaborative consumption and the sharing economy, social media and cities, digital institutions, contagion in networks, privacy strategy, pricing in digital markets and managing online piracy. He has published in numerous scientific journals and has given more than 200 conference and invited presentations internationally.

His research has been recognized by four Best Paper awards, been supported by organizations that include Yahoo!, Microsoft, Google and IBM, and recently profiled by trade publications that include The Atlantic, Bloomberg BusinessWeek, Fast Company, the Financial Times, Forbes, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Wall Street Journal. His op-eds and expert commentary have appeared in TIME Magazine, the New Yorker, the New York Times, Le Monde, El País, Wired, TechCrunch, the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times and Harvard Business Review, and on Al Jazeera, BBC News, Bloomberg, CNN, CNBC, Fox, NPR, PBS and a variety of non-English language TV networks. He has served as Director of NYU Stern’s IS Doctoral Program since 2007, is one of the founders of the Workshop on Information in Networks, and is an advisor to OuiShare and the National League of Cities. He holds degrees from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras and the University of Rochester.

@digitalarun

## LANA SWARTZ

### Blockchain Between Digital Metallism and Infrastructural Mutualism, Or: What Does (Can?) it Mean to be a “Peer”?

Early coverage of (and, perhaps, interest in) Bitcoin tended to focus on Bitcoin as a token: how much it’s “worth,” how high the “price” has soared, how low it’s crashed, etc. This version of the Bitcoin story focuses on what Maurer, Nelms, and I have called “digital metallism.” Digital metallism is more than just an interest in commodity speculation: it is

a mode of political and social agency. For traditional metallists, having a currency backed by a scarce commodity allows people to transact autonomously without any need for trust in each other or in centralized authority like a state. To metallists, money is a “creature of the market,” a “creature of the law.” For digital metallists, Bitcoin is a commodity currency “backed” by cryptographic proof, unforgeable scarcity guaranteed by the distributed blockchain. Frequently overlooked was what I call “infrastructural mutualism,” that is, the interest, in an idealized vision, the capacity to produce a network of peers engaged in an effort to produce a decentralized, distributed infrastructure. Although Bitcoin’s commodity token function has undergone a bubble of attention and value, this infrastructural mutualism is present both in Bitcoin’s origins as a payment rail, and in the future of the blockchain as a distributed ledger. How does the legacy of digital metallism continue to impact implementation and future visions of the blockchain? To what extent does it overwhelm efforts to produce infrastructural mutualism? How might we design distributed systems to be more inclusive of varieties of “peership”? What other models, beyond the blockchain, might we look to? What are the limits of the governance and cooperation modalities afforded by infrastructural mutualism?

Lana Swartz is a post-doctoral researcher at Microsoft Research New England and a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. In Fall 2016, she will join the Media Studies department at

the University of Virginia as an assistant professor. Most of her research is about money and other communication technologies. Her recent dissertation looked at money as communication, both in terms of information transmission and as a vector of relations, memory, and culture and included chapters on the history of public and private visions of payment in the United States, frequent flyer miles, community money, and other “alternative” currencies, transactional data and privacy, and ideological and technological tensions around Bitcoin.

## MINERVA TANTOCO

Minerva Tantoco is New York City's first-ever Chief Technology Officer (CTO). As CTO, Tantoco directs the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation with responsibility for the development and implementation of a coordinated citywide strategy on technology and innovation and encouraging collaboration across agencies and with the wider New York City technology ecosystem. For more than 25 years - from launching her own start-up to directing technology and innovation for large enterprises - Tantoco has worked to affect business transformation across a range of industries from advertising to finance. With her appointment to the administration of New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, she brings this wealth of experience in technology-enabled transformation to government.

Raised in Flushing, Queens, Tantoco is a product of New York City public schools. She attended Bronx Science High School and while still in college, moved to

Silicon Valley where she co-founded technology startup, Manageware Inc, which was successfully sold five years later. Since then, Ms. Tantoco has led emerging technology initiatives including artificial intelligence, e-commerce, virtualization, online marketing and mobile applications. Ms. Tantoco holds four US patents on intelligent workflow and is a speaker and author on mobile, security, big data, and innovation. As Senior Product Manager at Palm, Tantoco pioneered mobile enterprise solutions in the early 2000s which helped pave the path in mobile technology, developing and deploying some of the world's earliest mobile applications. As Chief Architect at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Tantoco led the re-design and implementation of the company's Investment Banking data warehouse, a project that mirrors many of the City's big data and analytics initiatives. Ms. Tantoco most recently served as UBS APAC CTO for client-facing technology and innovation, with regional responsibility for the Asia Pacific region.

[@Minervatweet](#)

[nyc.gov/site/forward/index.page](http://nyc.gov/site/forward/index.page)

## ASHLEY TAYLOR

### ConsenSys

Cooperative ownership is enabled by a new wave of decentralized technologies, such as the blockchain, distributed file storage and computation protocols, and decentralized identity and reputation systems. ConsenSys, a blockchain production studio, is developing tools and platforms that allow cooperatives to easily form, manage their resources, make decisions, collaborate, trans-

parently distribute equity and shares, and evolve themselves. These include boardroom.to (a group governance and decision making tool), inflekt.us (an open source community network and events management platform), weifund.io (decentralized crowdfunding and equity distribution), and uPort.me (a cryptographic identity and reputation system).

Ashley Taylor is a Social Innovation & Strategy member of Consensus Systems (ConsenSys), a company that is utilizing the technology underlying Bitcoin, the blockchain. They build applications that run on Ethereum, a cryptographically-secure, decentralized network. It is likened to a global, shared computer with a transparent public ledger. Specifically, Ashley is interested in the potential of the blockchain to catalyze community organization using tools that enable liquid democracy and micro-economies. Ashley studied Cultural Anthropology and Visual and Media Studies at Duke University. Previously she worked with a group of data and media artists at the Office for Creative Research, who craft tools for engaging with the human side of data. She was also part of a think tank, Center for Planetary Culture, where they developed a wiki that crowdsourced viable models for social change. She grew up in the Piedmont foothills of North Carolina, and has also been a yoga therapy teacher.

[consensys.net](http://consensys.net)

[cybnographer.com](http://cybnographer.com)

## ASTRA TAYLOR

### Debtor Organizing

The Debt Collective is a new organization for organizing, advocacy and resistance with and on behalf of people in debt. It is an initiative firmly grounded in the present moment of wage stagnation, mass indebtedness, and a fractured working and middle class. The Debt Collective enables its members—whether they are low-wage workers, mortgage holding families, or struggling students—to renegotiate, resist, and refuse unfair debts. This talk will provide an overview of the Debt Collective's current campaigns, look at the limitations and possibilities of digital technologies for building debtor power, and ask what role can debtor organizing play in building a more cooperative economy.

Astra Taylor is a filmmaker, writer, and activist. Her films include *Zizek!*, a documentary about the world's most outrageous philosopher, and *Examined Life*, a series of excursions with contemporary thinkers including Slavoj Zizek, Judith Butler, Cornel West, Peter Singer and others. Taylor's writing has appeared in *The Nation*, the *London Review of Books*, *Bookforum*, and elsewhere. She is the editor of *Examined Life*, a companion to the film, and coeditor of *Occupy!: Scenes from Occupied America*. Taylor also helped launch the Occupy offshoot Strike Debt and its Rolling Jubilee campaign. Most recently she is the author of the book *The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age*. She is currently working on a documentary about democracy.

[debtcollective.org](http://debtcollective.org)

## CAMERON TONKINWISE

### Designing More Convenient Solidarity

The rise of the 'sharing economy' appears to indicate:

a) mobile digital connectivity lowering the transaction costs for peer-to-peer servicing, as well as

b) people increasingly interested in re-embedding economic exchanges in social interactions.

The dominant 'sharing economy' platforms are VC-backed businesses designed around the design objective of supply-side control and demand-side convenience, with interactions between the two fire-walled. This allows commoditization for higher volume transaction skimming. This presentation will explore how to design platforms that promoting and enabling negotiations between service providers and recipients that are crisp but meaningful.

Systems and interface designs should aim to make constraints transparent, and allow transactions to mix monetary and non-monetary costs (e.g., agreeing to decreased convenience as a service recipient given the service provider's constraints). The presentation will explore design options by critically reviewing the interaction designs of Uber (almost entirely an a) driven platform) and AirBnB (a platform with b) elements), and then demonstrating some speculative design proposals for platform cooperatives. The examples will show how the interaction design of the experience of a platform is crucial for re-appropriating the 'sharing economy' to the project of enhancing societal sustainability.

Cameron Tonkinwise is the Director of Design Studies at the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University. He also directs the School of Design's Doctoral research program which aims to bring practice-based design research to task of transitioning our societies toward more sustainable futures. Cameron has a background in philosophy and continues to research what designers can learn from philosophies of making, material culture studies and sociologies of technology. Much of his research focuses on the design of service systems that lower societal materials intensity, primarily by decoupling use and ownership - in other words, systems of shared use.

[cmu.academia.edu/](http://cmu.academia.edu/camerontonkinwise)  
[camerontonkinwise](http://camerontonkinwise)

## AKSELI VIRTANEN

### Robin Hood Asset Management Cooperative

What if finance were about making our monetary and other assets—like knowledge, abilities, skills, networks—liquid, effortlessly moving, connecting, communicating and opening into new possibilities? Robin Hood is engineering new P2P financial (both money market and capital market) instruments, which together with the organizational possibilities opened by the blockchain technologies will free finance to be social, cooperative to be unlimited, assets to be networked and capital to be distributed. When capital gets distributed on a distributed platform, it becomes nomadic: it is not division or distribution of something pre-existing in a space, but new distribution of the economic space itself. Robin Hood gives

people tools to create economic space.

Akseli Virtanen is an architect of new political finance, born in Finland and currently based in Santa Cruz, California. He is a co-founder of Robin Hood Asset Management Cooperative, an activist hedge fund, currently in the process of taking on a new more monstrous and distributed form as a financial platform of the future. Akseli's most recent book is *Arbitrary Power: A Contribution Towards a Critique of Biopolitical Economy* (n-1 Edições, forthcoming 2015).

[robinhoodcoop.org](http://robinhoodcoop.org)

[events.robinhoodcoop.org/  
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london\\_office\\_itinerary.pdf](http://events.robinhoodcoop.org/wp-content/uploads/london_office_itinerary.pdf)

## MCKENZIE WARK

McKenzie Wark is the author of *A Hacker Manifesto*, *Gamer Theory*, *50 Years of Recuperation of the Situationist International*, *The Beach Beneath the Street* and *The Spectacle of Disintegration* among other books. He teaches at the New School for Social Research and Eugene Lang College in New York City.

[@mckenziework](http://mckenziework)

## FELIX WETH

### CO-OP 2.0

Fairmondo is an online-marketplace created to become a true alternative to the big players in eCommerce. In order to ensure that Fairmondo lives up to its values even while scaling up, we developed a model that we call "CO-OP 2.0." This model includes structural provisions to ensure democratic accountabil-

ity for all stakeholders as well as legally binding commitments to transparency and open source. The next step is to transfer the model from Germany to other countries, aiming at the construction of a decentralized but technically integrated global online-marketplace collectively owned by the local co-ops.

Felix is the founder and CEO of Fairmondo, a German online-marketplace owned by its users. He holds degrees in political sciences, philosophy, economics, public policy, and administration. As an anti-corruption activist, he travelled widely through Africa where he saw how corruption deprives especially young people of life chances. For him, this experience highlighted the structural deficiencies of our economic and political systems. Later, he developed the idea of Fairmondo as a corruption-resistant, transparent, web-based company that could serve as a model for other businesses. Fairmondo publicizes its banking operations through the Open Bank project so that everyone can see and control what they do with their funds.

[fairmondo.de](http://fairmondo.de)

## BRIANNA WETTLAUFER

### Stocksy United

Stocksy United has set the bar for creativity by offering a tightly curated collection of high-quality stock photos to anyone seeking modern, relevant, authentic images. Stocksy is a cooperative driven by its core values to offer photographers a supportive community, fair pay and equity in the company as co-owners. The community behind Stocksy gains its strength through open

collaboration and support of ideas, experience, and artistic vision. Profitable almost from its inception, today Stocksy employs 25 people in 5 countries, has 850 voting member photographers, counts over 100 of the Fortune 500 amongst its clients, and is the agency of record for some of the the world's most prestigious ad agencies. As of Q2 2015, Stocksy has paid out over 4 million to its artists. Stocksy's success can be measured, also, by the impact it has had on its industry by heralding a shift towards highly curated collections and fairer royalties paid to photographers.

Brianna Wettkaufer is the co-founder and CEO of Stocksy United, an artist-owned, multi-stakeholder cooperative in Victoria, BC (Canada). With its stable of hand-picked photographers, Stocksy produces high-end, beautiful imagery that challenges the tired stereotypes found at traditional stock photography agencies. Brianna started Stocksy in 2012 with a team of industry veterans whose mandate was to create a marketplace that would remain true to its core ideals of sustainability and authenticity, while ensuring that the bulk of its revenues were returned to the artists that made it possible.

[stocksyst.com](http://stocksyst.com)

## ETHAN WINN

### Project SeedBombing

As part of a project we've codenamed "Project SeedBombing," CoLab Coop is working on an open platform to make starting a coop as straight-forward as kicking off a one-off crowdfunding campaign. We hope to turn the traditional crowdfunding model on its head: prior-

itizing accountability and the interests of coop members over the extractive economics of the current leaders of the crowd-funding movement. Tools like this can help new cooperatives get the equity they need, deliver ongoing, sustainable value to coop members and support established coops with tools that are in full alignment with the cooperative principles.

Ethan Winn is a technical architect and senior strategist at CoLab Coop. With a focus on the intersection of technology and social change, he has worked with groups ranging from local community groups to large non-profits and social-enterprise startups, leveraging open source technologies to build sites, social campaigns and apps that support strategic goals. He has been involved with local food cooperatives for over a decade, most recently serving on the board of Ithaca's GreenStar Cooperative Food Market.

[colab.coop](http://colab.coop)

## CAROLINE WOOLARD

### From TradeSchool.coop to NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative

Can cooperative platforms survive without patient capital and cooperative investment? Can transformative organizing for social change be facilitated online? After co-founding and co-facilitating sharing platforms OurGoods (<http://ourgoods.org>) and TradeSchool (<http://tradeschool.coop/story>) from 2008-2013, Caroline Woolard is proud to be a stewarding member of the early-phase NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative (<http://nycric.com>). Following a 15 minute presentation

about 8 years of work with cooperative platforms, Woolard will create space for an open conversation about the limits and possibilities of (1) online platforms for transformative organizing and (2) philanthropic, state-subsidized, and cooperative investment mechanisms for cooperative platforms.

Caroline Woolard is an artist and organizer based in Brooklyn, New York who works between the solidarity economy and conceptual art. Making media, sculptures, furniture, and events, Woolard co-creates spaces for critical exchange, forgotten histories, and desire inducing narratives. Her practice is research-based and collaborative. Sensing that each project transforms the people who make it, Woolard opens spaces for co-production rather than toiling alone. In 2009, Woolard cofounded three organizations to support collaborative cultural production; three long-term infrastructure projects that support short-term artworks: a studio space, OurGoods.org, and Trade School.coop. Working with conceptual artists, educators in the solidarity economy movement, and technologists in start-ups, Caroline Woolard labors for political economies of cooperation.

[@carolinewoolard](http://carolinewoolard)

[nycric.com](http://nycric.com)

## EMMA YORRA

### Scaling Cooperatives Through Platforms?

With nine years of experience organizing worker cooperatives in low-income communities, we have a strong proof of concept that cooperatives can be a

tool for profound social and economic empowerment and transformation in the lives of their members. Now the question is can that experience be scaled, while maintaining its fundamental values and holding on the transformational nature of the experience. It's a daunting question, but we think that platforms may play a role in the answer. The talk will focus on CFL's experience with cooperative development and new initiatives under development to approach the question of scale and sustainability with values.

Emma is the Co-Director of the Cooperative Development Program at the Center for Family Life (CFL) in Sunset Park, Brooklyn which develops women-led immigrant cooperatives, including Si Se Puede Women's Cleaning Cooperative, Beyond Care Childcare Cooperative and seven others whose services range from elder care to office cleaning to tutoring to pet care to guerrilla marketing to catering to handywork. CFL is a founding member of the NYC Worker Cooperative Coalition, and works with over 180 members in the eight cooperatives. Emma also collaborates with the Worker Owned Rockaways Cooperatives (WORCs) project, rebuilding the peninsula with cooperative development after Hurricane Sandy. Previously she spent 4 years in Nicaragua founding and directing an office of the cooperative finance fund, The Working World. Emma is undertaking a master's degree in Social Economics and Cooperative Business at Mondragon University in Spain.

[sco.org/programs/center-for-family-life](http://sco.org/programs/center-for-family-life)